



DOI: 10.18427/iri-2017-0084

## **Analysis of Registered NEETs' Educational Qualifications**

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This paper focuses on a special and vulnerable group amongst young people, so called: **NEET** (**N**ot in **E**mployment, **E**ducation or **T**raining). Between the NEET young people in Hungary, two groups can be divided according to their status: they can be registered by the local Employment Department (ED), or, for some reason, they decide not to be registered.

In this analysis, the author draws attention to the first sub-group; to those who are registered by the local ED in a Hungarian city, called Szeged. The town is the third largest one in terms of its population. The study analyses the registered NEETs' educational qualifications between 2009 and 2014. The data base is provided by the local ED.

Although researches on NEET young people have not had a long past in Hungary however, it is known that one of the characteristics of NEETs is low level of education. It is also known from other related studies that the lower the level of education is the harder for a young person to enter into the primary labour market.

The analysis supports the above statement. On the other hand, the study would like to highlight that not only those NEET young people are at a considerable risk who have the lowest level of education (or do not even) however, those also at a vulnerable position who have secondary school level. This level of education is divided into five different categories by the Hungarian education system. The first two categories (technical skill-oriented educations) provide only professions. The second two categories (vocational and technical school) provide both, professions and school leaving examinations. While the fifth category (high school), which predestines the student for further studies, gives only school leaving examination. The study shows that the numbers of those registered NEETs who have vocational school level education, in other words, have a profession and school leaving examination are almost the same with those who have the least level of qualification or even do not have any qualifications.

Considering these data, it should be important to make further studies on this phenomenon in order to understand our educational system in a

better way which might lead the professions to find a better condition for Hungarian youngsters to avoid becoming NEET.

### *Definition of NEET*

NEET is an acronym which means: **N**ot in **E**mployment, **E**ducation or **T**raining. Those young people are classifiable behind this label who are currently not working, but are among the active population, are not studying or not taking part in any training. Reading together the first letter of each word the concept of NEET is given (House of Common, 2010). There is another possibility to dissolve the acronym: Neither in Employment nor in Education and Training. However, in terms of its essence, the concept of NEET has the same meaning (Barta et al., 2016).

In the first half of the 1990s a British research on youth had already used a special term, "StatusZero", for those youngsters who were between 16 and 18 years of age, but they were not classifiable into any categories in terms of their status in the labour market (Eurofound, 2016a). The NEET as an acronym was coined in the United Kingdom (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999), however, the concept shortly became known worldwide from the UK through the western European countries to Taiwan (Chen, 2009).

The concept of NEET indicates in which systems the focus groups is not active, that is what they are not doing but, not visible form, the concept designates the age characteristics of the NEET group as well.

The NEET therefore, a separate, clearly defined and statistically measurable cohort whose members are aged between 15-24 years, and who are unemployed, are not in the education system or taking part in any training (Sánta, 2016a).

According to many international papers and organisations the members of the NEET are at a considerable risk and in a very vulnerable position (e.g. Spielhofer et al., 2009; Sissons & Jones, 2012; Dwyer & Shaw, 2013; DCSF, 2010; DfE, 2014; DfE & DfWP, 2014). Although, research on NEET young people have not had a long past in Hungary however, there are some studies which would agree with the above statement (e.g. Jancsák, 2003, 2011; Csoba, 2010).

One of the characteristics of the NEET young people is the low school performance coupled with inadequate level of qualification (Coles et al., 2010). At the same time the school career and closely related to this the highest level of qualification correlated with employment prospect as published in studies in and outside Hungary (Székely, 2013). If a young person, considering today's conditions, does not have an adequate level of qualification, it can be a serious disadvantage later for him/her in the labour market (Bauer-Szabó, 2011; Székely, 2013). I think this is more typical of young people who are already out of work and never completed their schooling; i.e. are not participating in any education or training system.

According to related studies, in Hungary, the employment rate may continuously raise the higher education a young person has (Bauer-Szabó, 2011). At the same time it can be seen that they may have lower amount of opportunities in the labour market, which presumably related to their low level of qualifications, the greater the chance of unemployment. Sixty-six percent of the unskilled workers and 60 percent of those who are living from odd jobs experienced unemployment (Bauer-Szabó, 2011). Within this group, the NEET young people are probably there although this category was not used in early researches.

Furthermore, the achieved level of education is not only reflected in the labour market but it may also manifest itself in other dimensions of personal life: e.g.: health or expected lifetime (Székely, 2013). This research data may predict the future prospects of those young people who are "stuck" in the NEET status.

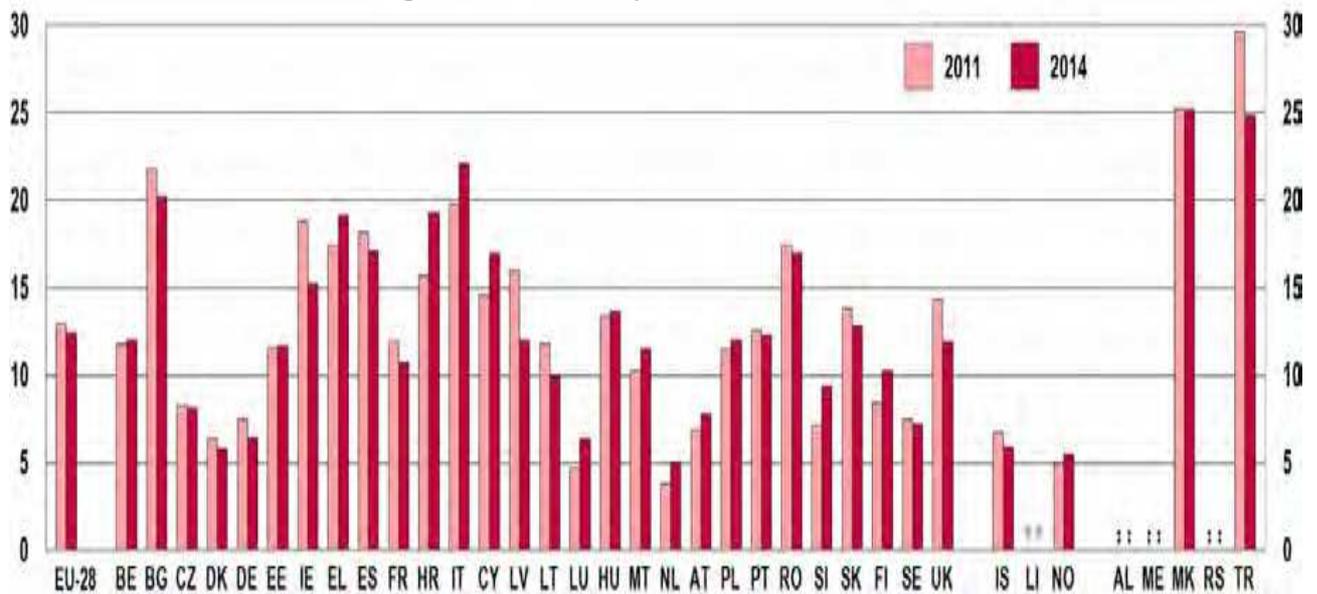
The large-sample research data show that those left behind in different educational levels who have unfavourable family background comparing with those who have reasonably wealthy family background in Hungary (Székely, 2013). This most likely reflected within the NEET group because research claims that beside the low level of qualification the deprived family circumstances are also highly characteristic of this group (Coles et al., 2010).

Taking into account the findings so far, it can be assumed that within the NEET group those will show the highest rate who have the lowest level of qualification. Or this hypothesis may be true conversely as well: those individuals will show the lowest rate who have the highest level of qualification within the NEET group. In this analysis, I am looking for the answer of these hypotheses. Before the analysis will be provided it may be worthwhile presenting some statistical data about the Hungarian NEET population.

### *Statistical data of Hungarian NEETs*

According to the *EU Youth Report 2015* (2016) the NEET rate in Hungary between 2011 and 2014 was higher than the EU-28 average. Even within this period the NEET rate increased. Table 1 shows this condition.

Table 1. Proportion of young people (age 15-24) not in employment, education or training (NEET rate), by countries, 2011 and 2014.



Source: EU Youth Report 2015, p. 226.

It can be seen, that the Hungarian NEET rate between 2011 and 2014 was higher than the EU-28 average and while the average NEET rate reduced in the whole European Union between the period until the Hungarian NEET rate grew.

According to the Eurostat, the rate of the NEET population in Hungary between 2001 and 2012 was as follows: in 2001, the NEET population in Hungary was 14.6 percent, and is observed a slow but steady decrease until 2007 and the NEET rate sank to 11.3 percent. After that however, a further increase occurred in the rate and it reached 14.7% which was a slightly higher than the baseline year data (European Commission, 2013). The next year data however showed a significant growth in Hungary and the NEET rate was 15.4 percent in 2013 (European Commission, 2014). This rate was higher by 2.4% then the EU average (European Commission 2014).

According to the latest Eurostat data, the Hungarian NEET population is greatly reduced comparing with the previous years and, in 2015 the Hungarian NEET rate was below the EU average (12%) and the percentage was close to the 2007 average (11.6%) (Eurostat, 2016). This data however, I think, does not primarily reflect on that indeed the number of those young people would have decreased who are at a considerable risk becoming NEET, merely substantially increased in the number of young public workers under 25 years of age (Sánta, 2016b) and also the rate of those young people who took a job abroad.

According to the OECD latest report, most of the young people never experience the NEET status; however, within the member states one-fifth of the young population are at risk of becoming NEET (OECD, 2016b).

The Organisation presented NEET data for Hungary as well (OECD, 2015). This dataset shows a period between 2005 and 2013 and, it can be

observed breakdowns by age group. According to these data, the proportion of 15-19 years old NEETs decreased from 6.42% to 5.95% in Hungary (OECD, 2015). However, the proportion of 20-24 years old NEETs dramatically increased within this period. In 2005, the rate increased from 18.93% and by 2013 the percentage reached 26.07%. (OECD, 2015) In addition to growth a tendency can also be observed within the NEET group the rate of the young population is much lower than the rate of the older NEET population.

The latest data from the OECD database reflect this statement however the decrease of the NEET population is discernible as well as in the Eurostat database. In 2014, the rate of the proportion of 15-19 years old NEETs was 6.84% in Hungary and this rate is moderated somewhat to 6.11%. Although the proportion of 20-24 years old NEETs decreased however, their rate is significantly higher than the rate of the younger NEET population. According to the data, the proportion of 20-24 years old NEETs was 20.59% in 2014 and this rate decreased to 18.44% by 2015 (OECD, 2016a).

The NEET group is not considered as homogeneous (Audit Commission, 2010). Fundamental differences are needed to be considered in order to get a more precise demarcation. Taking into account the purpose of this paper it would be enough to distinguish two groups within the whole NEET group in Hungary. One of them is those young people who are registered by the local Employment Department (ED). The other one however, those young people who, for some reasons, decided not to be registered by the local ED. The willingness of registration needs to be researched by further studies.

It is noticeable that in Hungary, a prerequisite of the targeted programs which support the reintegration of the NEET young people that the young people should be registered by the local ED as a jobseeker. However, according to the Eurofound research (2016b), only 36.7 percent of the whole Hungarian NEET population registered as jobseekers at the local EDs in 2013 which was under the EU average. This is supported by one of my earlier research studies which was taken in Szeged (Sánta, 2016c). This study showed that more than half of the whole NEET group in Szeged did not register as jobseekers at the local ED.

## *Methodology*

In this paper an analysis has been done on the registered NEET young people in Szeged. The study focuses on their completed schooling between 2009 and 2014. The data comes from the database of the Csongrád County Government Offices Employment Department (hereinafter: ED). The presented data were given to me but as far as I understood, they were not published in this form by the ED.

Before the analysis, it is necessary to mention some important methodological characteristics connection to the ED's database. The ED

takes up only those young people into its database who are officially registered as jobseekers at the Department. A young person can only belong to this category if (s)he, beside their registered status, does not take part in any education system or training, that means: (s)he is in NEET. Therefore, it can be said that the number of the registered NEET population in Szeged, provided by the ED, is surely lower than the number of the whole NEET population in Szeged, provided by the census data from the Central Statistics Office. Because there can live many young people in the town who, for some reasons, do not register as jobseekers at the local ED (Sánta, 2016c).

Furthermore, the data is not given for 15-24 age group by the ED but uses three different age categories: 18 years of age and under, 19 years old, and 20-24 years of age. According to a staff of the Organisation, people of 18 years of age and under category approximately consist of the 17-18 years old age sub-group. This breakdown gives new research possibilities in the future however, in this analysis in a consolidated age group (17-24 years old) will be investigated in terms of the completed schooling of the registered NEET young people in Szeged.

The local ED distinguishes nine different main categories in terms of qualifications however, does not mention the gender breakdowns in the categories. The first two main categories consist of the lowest level of education, that means elementary school, and those also in this category who are even do not have this lowest level. The next main category is secondary education which is divided into five sub-categories by the Hungarian education system: The first two sub-categories (technical skill-oriented educations) provide only professions. The second two sub-categories (vocational and technical school) provide both, professions and school leaving examinations. While the fifth sub-category (high school), which predestines the student for further studies, gives only school leaving examination. Finally, the last main category is higher education which is also divided into two sub-categories (college and university).

In this paper, a simplified table will be presented which shows data of the levels of qualifications of the registered NEET young people in Szeged between 2009 and 2014. The simplified table means that the above mentioned nine different main categories are reduced into four categories. Those who have elementary school level and those who do not even have this are in the same category. The second category consists of young people who have a profession and/or school leaving examination. The third group consists of those who only have school leaving examination. The last category consists of those who have higher education level (either college or university level). I think these four categories are able to expressively present the levels of educational qualification, from the lowest to the highest level. I believe, by this, the analysis will be more transparent and the results will be more prominent.

## Data Analysis

As mentioned above, the analysis begins with a simplified table which shows data of the registered NEET young people in Szeged between 2009 and 2014. Table 2 presents these data.

Table 2. Educational qualifications of 17-24 years old registered NEET young people in Szeged between 2009 and 2014. (person)

<i>Educational qualification</i>	<i>Age group</i>	<i>2009</i>	<i>2010</i>	<i>2011</i>	<i>2012</i>	<i>2013</i>	<i>2014</i>
Elementary school and lower	17-24 age group	228	244	258	274	124	199
Profession and School leaving examination (technical skill-oriented educations, vocational and technical school)	17-24 age group	465	419	405	465	367	341
School leaving examination (high school)	17-24 age group	166	166	156	201	152	138
Higher education (college, university)	17-24 age group	72	54	45	56	73	35
In all:	17-24 age group	931	883	864	996	716	713

*Source: CsCGOED; edited by the author*

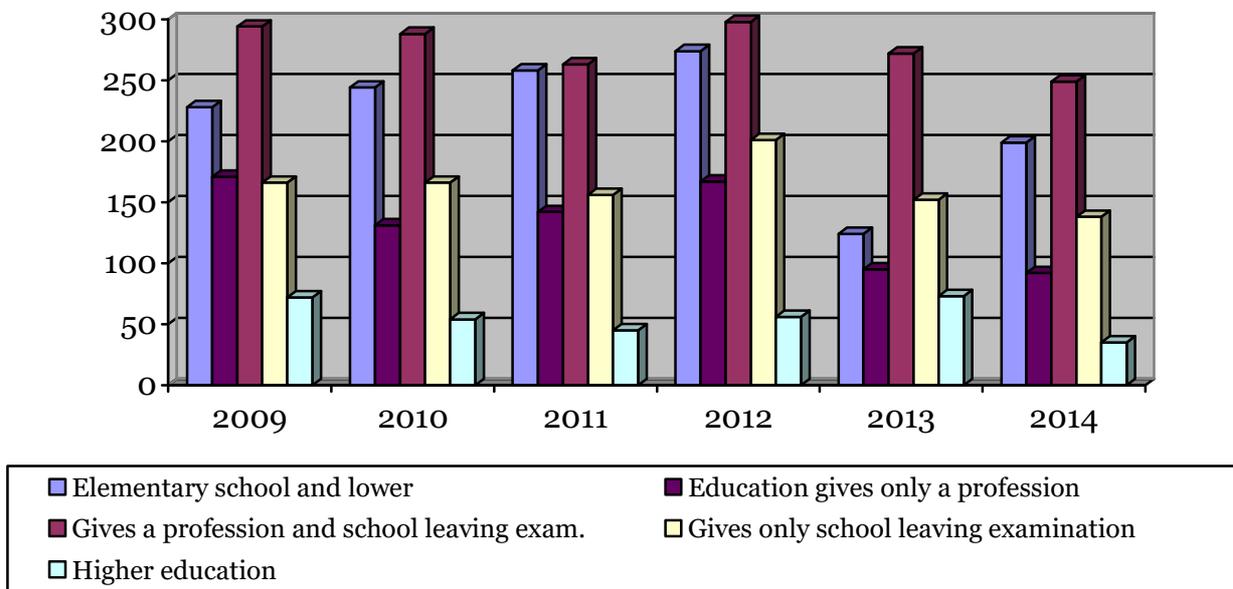
The table shows that between 2009 and 2014 the number of 17-24 years old registered NEET young people in Szeged decreased in total however, a more detailed investigation presents exceptions in each period. The number of those who have the lowest level of qualification (or even do not have any) continuously increased between 2009 and 2012 then in the last two years, compared to the previous ones, has dramatically decreased.

Those, who have a profession and/or school leaving examination show fluctuation but the year of 2012 is outstanding also, after that the figures decrease. Those, who have only school leaving examination at first show a kind of stagnation then their number decreased in 2011. However, in

2012 a protrusion in the numbers can be observed that is followed with a continuous decrease. The number of those, who have higher education decreased until 2011 then between 2012 and 2013 their number was greatly increased, even in 2013 their number exceeded the 2009 base data. However, in the final examination year a significant decrease can be observed in their number.

The table also shows that those are with the highest rate who have the lowest qualification and have the “lower” secondary education. That means they are presumably the most at risk within the NEET group. Figure 1, which closely relates to the second table shows the above mentioned fluctuations. Furthermore, it also shows the two groups who have the lowest level of qualification but in their number represents the highest rate.

Figure 1. Educational qualifications of 17-24 years old registered NEET young people in Szeged between 2009 and 2014. (person)



Source: CsCGOED; edited by the author

The chart is prepared as follows: the “lower” secondary educations are divided into two sub-categories: one of them is the qualification which gives only a profession (this is the second column from left to right). And the other one is the qualification which provides a profession and a school leaving examination (this is the third column from left to right). The fourth column on the row is shows the high school education which provides only school leaving examination. Finally, on the right side the column represents the higher education level. This division, I believe, focuses on those sub-groups within the educational attainments who are mostly at risk staying in the long-term NEET status.

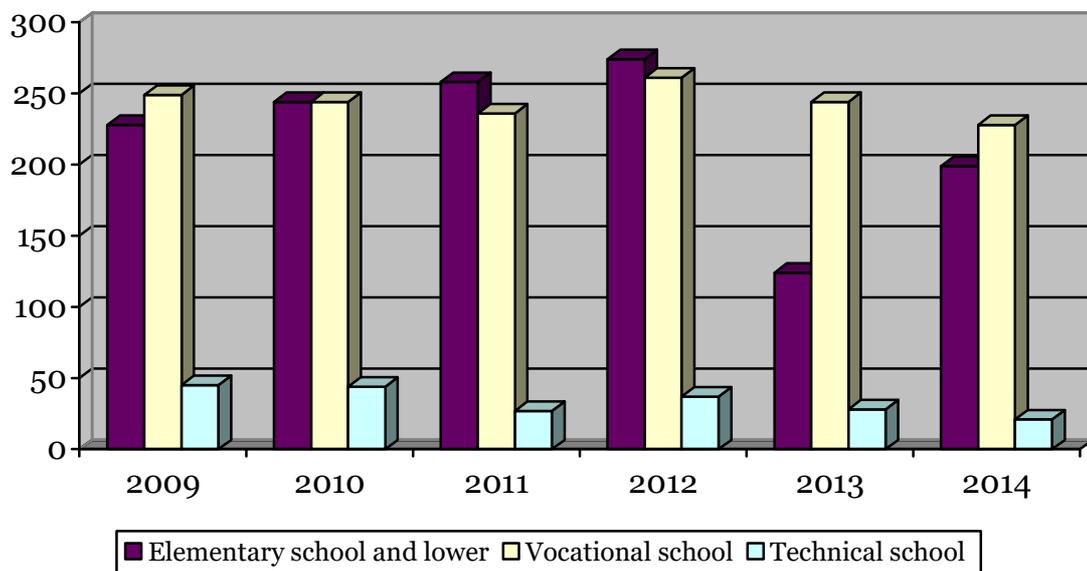
Although it is well-marked however is not surprising that those proportion is one of the highest who have the lowest qualification or even does not have any. Those young people can probably be the most at risk

within the NEET population. Previous researches also drew attention to this (Bauer-Szabó, 2011; Székely, 2013).

However, it also stands out that the other especially vulnerable sub-group includes those young people who have a qualification which provides a profession and a school leaving examination. Also interesting, that in the third most vulnerable category between 2009 and 2014 those are included who have high school education. Even their number exceeded those who have the lowest qualification in 2013.

The analysis continues on the way that it focuses on the two mostly vulnerable sub-groups that is, on those who have the lowest qualification (or even do not have any) and on those who have a qualification which provides a profession and a school leaving examination. If we see the second one, it can be divided into two new categories: one of them is a vocational school qualification while the other one is a technical school qualification. This other division, I think, is suited to demonstrate that in the research period which kind of qualifications were possessed by those who are probably the most vulnerable within the registered NEET group in Szeged.

Figure 2. Distribution of qualifications of the 17-24 years old NEET young people in Szeged with elementary and "lower" secondary education between 2009 and 2014. (person)



Source: CsCGOED; edited by the author

So, the bar charts only present three different categories: The first one (on the left side) shows those who have the lowest level of qualification (elementary school or under). The second one (in the middle) represents the rate of those who have a qualification which provides a profession and a school leaving examination. The school years, in this case, have usually lasted for four years. The last one (on the right side) demonstrates the rate of those who have a qualification which also provides a profession and a school leaving examination. This can be an optional choice for a

student if (s)he would like to continue their studies after finishing the vocational school.

It can be seen, that the rate of those who have technical school qualification is much lower comparing with the other two categories. However, it is striking that the rate of those who have vocational school qualification is very high even, in some cases, their number exceeds the rate of those who have the lowest qualification (or even do not have any). In 2013, for example, this difference in numbers is especially significant.

Thus, it can probably say from the data that in the research period amongst the registered NEET young people in Szeged regarding their qualifications those have the highest proportion who have the lowest qualification or under (or even do not have any) furthermore, those who have vocational school qualification (that is, who have a profession and a school leaving examination but did not continue their studies towards technical school). So it seems that amongst the registered NEET group in Szeged (which in itself is already a vulnerable group) those can be at a considerable risk regarding their qualifications who have elementary school level (or under) and have vocational school level.

In terms of its reasons this analysis cannot be explained. Giving acceptable answers further research needs to be done in the future. However, some questions may be asked which can be thought provoking.

It can be possible that the registration tolerance is higher amongst those NEET young people in Szeged who have vocational school level (which means have a profession and a school leaving examination) comparing with those who have qualification which provides only a profession (technical skill-oriented education). It may be acceptable however, as the research pointed out the registration tolerance is also high amongst those NEET young people in Szeged who have the lowest qualification (or even do not have any). If we see the registration tolerance the question remains why the registration tolerance of those is lower who have only a profession as a qualification (without school leaving examination) which maybe a disadvantage in the labour market (and, at the moment, I do not reflect on the other categories)?

If a young person receives vocational school level qualification that can mean (s)he has a higher level theoretical knowledge coupled with a lower level practical knowledge. While if a young person receives technical skill-oriented education that can mean (s)he has a lower level theoretical knowledge coupled with a higher level practical knowledge. That maybe means those young people who have qualification which provides higher level practical knowledge are more sought in the labour market than those who have higher level theoretical knowledge but they may need more practice. If this is true it raise up again a question: is the young person not so popular in the labour market in Szeged who has a qualification which provides a profession with a higher level theoretical knowledge?

Or, seeing the other side of the coin, does a young person who has a qualification which provides a higher level practical knowledge (without school leaving examination) perhaps sooner choose to take on a job possibility in the grey (or black) economy while a young person with a

higher level qualification rather registers at the local ED hoping that to get a legal job?

This analysis, as I mentioned earlier, is not suited to provide answers for the above questions and was not the purpose of it. In order to be able to answer these questions a more in-depth research is needed and qualitative research might have been necessary to take.

## *Conclusion*

In this paper, an analysis was done on the registered NEET young people in Szeged. The study focused on their completed schooling between 2009 and 2014. The data came from the database of the Csongrád County Government Offices Employment Department (ED). The presented data were given to me but as far as I understood, they had not been published in this form.

Taking into account the findings so far two hypotheses were taken at the beginning of the paper. The first one was: it can be assumed that within the registered NEET group in Szeged those will show the highest rate who have the lowest level of qualification. The analysis demonstrated that between 2009 and 2014 amongst the 17-24 years old registered NEET group in Szeged this hypothesis was only partly true. Indeed one of the largest group within the registered NEET population in Szeged between 2009 and 2014 includes those who have the lowest educational attainment (or even do not have any). However, this group is approximately equal in number with those who have vocational school level qualification (which means have a profession and a school leaving examination). Even, in 2013 this group was significantly higher than the group of the lowest educational attainment.

In terms of its reasons this analysis was not able to explain. Giving acceptable answers further research needs to be done in the future. However, some questions may be asked which can be thought provoking.

It is possible, that the registration tolerance is higher amongst those NEET young people in Szeged who have vocational school level (which means have a profession and a school leaving examination) comparing with those who have qualification which provides only a profession (technical skill-oriented education). It may be acceptable however, as the research pointed out the registration tolerance is also high amongst those NEET young people in Szeged who have the lowest qualification (or even do not have any). If we see the registration tolerance the question remains why the registration tolerance of those is lower who have only a profession as a qualification (without school leaving examination) which maybe a disadvantage in the labour market?

If a young person receives vocational school level qualification that can mean (s)he has a higher level theoretical knowledge coupled with a lower level practical knowledge. While if a young person receives technical skill-oriented education that can mean (s)he has a lower level theoretical

knowledge coupled with a higher level practical knowledge. Maybe that means those young people who have qualification which provides higher level practical knowledge are more sought in the labour market than those who have higher level theoretical knowledge but they may need more practice. If this is true it raises again a question: is the young person not so popular in the labour market in Szeged who has a qualification which provides a profession with a higher level theoretical knowledge?

Or, seeing the other side of the coin, does a young person who has a qualification which provides a higher level practical knowledge (without school leaving examination) perhaps sooner choose to take a job opportunity in the grey (or black) economy while a young person with a higher level qualification rather registers at the local ED hoping that to get a legal job?

The second hypothesis was: those will show the lowest rate who have the highest level of qualification within the registered NEET group in Szeged. This hypothesis seems to be confirmed. Indeed, those who had the highest level of qualifications amongst the 17-24 years old registered NEET young people in Szeged were the fewest in number between 2009 and 2014. Although it is definitely worthy of attention that these young people are in this vulnerable group (and life position), their number is vacillating, and even there is one year (2013) when their number shows a significant growth.

This analysis was not suited to provide answers for the above questions and was not the purpose of it. In order to be able to answer these questions a more in-depth research is needed and qualitative research might have been necessary to take.

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