

Young people of low educational level: promoting innovative projects

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SUMMARY

Data from the Balearic Islands (Spain) on the number of young people dropping out of the education system with no formal qualification and on the general level of education of the young population as a whole indicate that this region is not on a par with most of the other regions in Spain and the European Union as a whole. The regional government commissioned a study of this phenomenon from the University of the Balearic Islands.

This article presents the main aspects of the study. It outlines the remit as specified by the regional government, characterises the main issues of the socio-occupational integration of young people in the Balearic Islands, describes the general research approach applied (basic concepts, phases and methodology) and concludes with the study's main results and conclusions.

Key words

Employment-training relationship, level of training, professional training, vocational preparation, regional employment, skill level

1. Introduction

The main objective of the study presented below was to contribute findings and instruments to assist regional training and vocational integration policy targeted towards young people of low educational level.

The research method started out from the premise of research for action. The main concepts used were: young people with a low educational level, socio-occupational integration, innovative projects and good practice. The article summarises the study under the following headings:

- the issue and study remit;
- basic concepts, study phases and methodology;
- results;
- conclusions.

2. The issue and study remit

This section describes the distinguishing features of the socio-occupational integration of young people in the Balearic Islands and the characteristics of regional demand.

2.1. Specific problems relating to the employment and social integration of young people in the Balearics

The employment and social integration of young people in the Balearic Islands are subject to a number of socio-economic and educational factors:

- (a) it is easy to find a job,
- (b) economic activity is largely service-related and
- (c) the general level of education is low.

Each of these factors is addressed in brief below.

a) It is easy to find a job

The Balearic Islands are heavily dependent on tourism; there is a large supply of jobs in the service sector and the construction industry. As a result, the regional activity rate of young people aged 15 to 24 (40.38%) is higher than the national level (32.70%) and very close to the European rate for this age bracket (41.16%).⁽¹⁾

Within this age group, young men tend to benefit most. The unemployment rate among young men aged 15 to 24 stands at 9.25%, slightly below the national rate (9.8%), although higher than the overall European average (6.51%)⁽²⁾.

The fact that it is so easy to find work - albeit often only temporary employment - is one reason for educational disaffection and early school dropout. In the Balearic Islands, the proportion of those over 16 who are still at school is lower than both the national and European average; in fact, this figure begins to diverge substantially from age 17 (Balearic Islands 62.8%, Spain 74.4%, EU 85.7%⁽³⁾), the gap subsequently widening even further.

⁽¹⁾ Source: EUROSTAT (<http://eurostat.com>). The figures relate to the year 2000.

⁽²⁾ Idem.

⁽³⁾ Source: National Institute for Quality and Evaluation (2000) and Cedefop (2001).

b) Economic activity is largely service-related

As indicated, the importance of tourism to the Balearic economy means that most jobs are in the services sector. The proportion of the population working in the services sector is almost eight percentage points higher than in Spain as a whole and 2.5 percentage points higher than in the European Union as a whole ⁽⁴⁾.

69.72% of young people aged 16 to 24 are employed in the service sector - mainly tourism. Employment tends to be seasonal; the level of agricultural activity is very low (0.53%). Most young people employed in heavy industry (19.68% of the total) work in the construction industry, which derives much of its impetus from the heavy demand for tourist and holiday facilities ⁽⁵⁾.

c) Low educational level

In view of premature dropout and growing disaffection in the final years of schooling - no doubt due to the good job prospects - the educational level of young people in the Balearics is below the national average ⁽⁶⁾. In fact, the number of those holding post-compulsory certificates of secondary education is lower in the region than anywhere else in Spain.

Similarly, with the exception of the first cycle of compulsory secondary education, the percentage of young people aged 16 to 35 leaving school between 1990 and 2000 with the appropriate educational certificate is lower in the Balearic Islands than in the rest of Spain across all levels of education. For example, the number of those with a certificate of higher education is 10% lower than in the rest of Spain: only 32.8% of young people complete higher education compared to the national average of 43% ⁽⁷⁾.

2.2. Study remit

In January 2000, the Balearic Islands government signed a pact with employers' and trade union organisations on employment, social cohesion and measures to boost the regional productivity. The pact includes a number of annexes, one of which addresses the issue of the training and employment of young people.

Sectoral advisory committees comprising representatives of the social partners and other relevant stakeholders were set up to handle the issues listed in the various annexes.

One of the fundamental issues addressed by the advisory committee on youth was the funding of projects for young people. A major question was how to ensure the survival of innovative projects concerned with the train-

⁽⁴⁾ Source: regional government of the Balearic Islands.

⁽⁵⁾ Idem.

⁽⁶⁾ Various studies have highlighted the fact that those with a low educational level encounter greater difficulty in finding a job (Descy, 2002; Kovacs, 2003).

⁽⁷⁾ Source: National Statistics Institute (2000).

ing, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level implemented as a response to calls for innovative projects – many of which did not match the overall policy of the Balearic government - at a time when it was considered that pioneering initiatives of this kind should be self-sustaining and share their qualities and good practices with other projects.

Against this background, a research group set up by the University of the Balearic Islands was given a wide remit to conduct a study designed to devise tools to formulate and implement policies concerned with the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level in the Balearic Islands. The essential elements of the study - jointly formulated by representatives of the ministries of employment, training and social welfare and organisations implementing youth projects, which were also members of the advisory committee and the University of the Balearic Islands - were as follows:

- Target group: young people aged 16 to 30 having failed to obtain the minimum educational qualification in the form of a certificate of compulsory secondary education (*graduado en educación secundaria*) at the end of compulsory schooling;
- Territorial focus: definition of priorities to be set at territorial level and proposals on the role of local employment pacts;
- Differentiation: the study was to take account of age group and gender differences;
- Recommendation: while being of an essentially analytical character, the study was to lead on to recommendations on both specific actions to be implemented and studies to be initiated or continued;
- Contributors: organisations concerned with the training, employment and social integration of young people, as well as information provided by the relevant public agencies;
- Phases: an initial phase (May and June 2001) was to address examples of good practice in the Balearic Islands and generate initial conclusions and recommendations; a second phase (September 2001 to June 2002) was to examine other issues.

3. Nature of the study: basic concepts, phases and method

This section describes the basic concepts, phases and method of the study.

3.1. Basic concepts

The basic terms of reference for the research were: young people of low educational level, employment, social integration, innovative projects and good practice.

The term 'young people of low educational level' was understood in the narrower sense of the term to mean those having failed to obtain a mini-

mum (level 1) vocational qualification under EU comparability criteria (Council of the European Communities, 1985). In the Spanish education system this is the qualification attained on completion of compulsory secondary education or within specific training programmes (Ministry of education and science, 1988).

The concept may be broadened to include:

- young people whose highest qualification is a certificate of secondary education or apprenticeship (Loos, 2002, 18);
- under-25s who have completed compulsory education but are not adequately skilled to find a first job or who have left school without a certificate of secondary education and have no access to vocational training (Colson, Gerard, 1997);
- young people who have failed to complete the second cycle of secondary education - UNESCO's CINE 3, the criterion used for Cedefop's NewSkills projects ('New vocational qualification needs and persons without qualification', Cedefop, 2000).

The concept of the link between employment and social integration has its origins in the report by Schwartz (1985) who considered the employment of young people as one element of a broader process of transition to adulthood within a given social and historical context, as well as the OECD report on young people in a changing society (Coleman, Husen, 1989). Although, strictly speaking, 'occupational integration' and 'employment' do not have exactly the same meaning, employment and social integration has since become synonymous with socio-occupational integration.

When discussing measures for the social education of young people, both terms are used to mean integration into the world of work of people of low educational level and those in a situation of exclusion or social vulnerability.

For the purposes of our research, the term 'innovative projects' was understood to mean both projects that have received funding under a Community employment and human resources development initiative, as well as those which helped improve the methods and results of work with young people of low educational level, even if they had not been granted financial assistance.

The term 'good practice' is generally used in the field to denote a new and effective method of delivering training (Loos 2002, 12). In training, employment and social integration the term has become widely used in connection with the training and employment policies promoted by the European Union. In an article on European vocational training research, Sellin and Grollman (1999, 80) refer to the study of best practice as being aimed at improvement, as 'cross-border research activity in Europe is closely bound up with the political process of European unification'.

The term is used to tap knowledge generated from experimentation with new forms of training, employment and social integration for groups with special difficulties.

Interesting contributions in the field of the socio-occupational integration of young people of low educational level were found in various documents and publications (IFAPLAN, 1987; Ketter, Petzold, Schlegel, 1987; Commission of the European Communities, 1994; Schwartz, 1994; European Commission, 1997).

3.2. Phases and method

Following a proposal from the representatives of the various ministries involved, it was agreed that the study should be organised in two phases. The relatively short first phase was to devise means for the design and implementation of training and employment policies for the target group under the terms of the employment pact.

A technical working group was set up consisting of 14 practitioners active in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people, representing the organisations on the employment pact advisory committee on youth employment, as well as a number of other bodies, professional experts and experts from the University of the Balearic Islands. The working group held several meetings and drew up a report, the key results of which are presented below.

The second phase principally involved the compilation of statistical data, analysis of documentary resources⁽⁸⁾ and the formulation of recommendations. This phase was conducted on the basis of ongoing cooperation with the organisations represented on the advisory committee, with assistance from the professional staff of the ministries who either provided statistical data or acted as intermediaries. Organisations and individual professionals from the islands of Menorca and Ibiza also became increasingly involved in this phase of the project.

The final report was first submitted to the ministries which had commissioned the study and subsequently to the representatives of the advisory committee and the Ministry of Education and Culture. It was then published in book form (Salvà, ed., 2002) and made available for comment on all three Balearic Islands.

The method applied in the research was based on the principles of research for action⁽⁹⁾, which seeks to combine theory and practice in addressing reality. It was designed to encourage analysis of individuals' own actions and to ensure that reality is grasped from within. While not

⁽⁸⁾ Documentational research was carried out on the subject of "youth and employment". This involved consulting general documentation on European policies and regional strategies, local, regional and national plans, programmes, projects and actions, as well as articles on the subject matter of the study.

⁽⁹⁾ This is the methodology used by our research group. Relevant publications resulting from this type of research relating to the training and employment of persons of low educational level include Salvà, Pons, Morell (2000), Salvà, Calvo, Cloquell (2001) and Salvà, Oliver, Casero (2002).

discounting statistical data, it does not attach excessive importance to measurable and observable data. Its criterion for evidence is that the findings are an expression of ordinary social life, while at the same time appreciating the value of practical experience in theoretical research (Calvo, 2002, 114).

4. Results

This section presents the main results of the study. The first section outlines the results of the first phase, with reference to good practice and government policy. The next section examines the main educational and labour market indicators, as well as available provision. Finally, the third section presents recommendations for policy in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level.

4.1. Good practice and government policy

The results of the first stage of the study mainly served to achieve a consensus among the various players as to what constituted good or bad practice and to identify the opportunities and obstacles in this regard.

Characteristics of 'good practice'

General

- The measures start out from a global and integrative perspective of the socio-occupational integration of young people.
- They are linked to the reality of the labour market (most frequent job supply, new sources of employment, the seasonal nature of the economy, the fact that it is relatively easy to find a job and earn money).
- They are related to the young people's local and social environment.
- Their starting point is young people's needs but they also deliver adequate training.
- They involve the enterprises.
- They integrate young women with a low educational level.
- They integrate young people facing major financial, educational and social problems.
- They maintain relations with other practices, institutions, etc.
- They provide instruments to adapt to the new demands of the labour market. They provide for multiskilling.
- They start out from a broad concept of training which also includes personal development and the social dimension.
- They include training in information and communication technologies.

Method

- They link work and learning, include alternance between training and work in the enterprise in situations of production.
- They break with the school-based method of schools and use innovative methods (youth involvement, reinforcement of tutorials and the role of the group, etc.).
- They work with individualised pathways and include a strong involvement of the young participants.
- They follow up clients placed in employment, supporting their overall socio-occupational integration process. They take account of integration periods.
- They incorporate broad evaluation as an element of the working process.

Resources

- They have high-quality human and material resources.
- They have a good team of professionals (teamwork, engaged in training, etc.).

Conversely, 'bad practice' includes: starting the intervention from age 16 onwards with no liaison with secondary schools; evaluating success merely on the basis of the number of placements, without taking social aspects into account; designing the project on the basis of formal project specifications rather than real needs; developing training content which fails to respond to business sectors offering recruitment potential; organising activities without taking the summer peak in economic activity into account (the normal pace cannot be maintained during this period).

These elements were then used as a basis for 31 recommendations on government policy to encourage good practice. These are subsumed under 14 headings and 14 sets of comments, presented under three main headings in accordance with the Ministry of Employment and Training's latest call for grant applications, which are the principal source of finance for projects in our field. These recommendations are discussed in further detail in section 4.4.

4.2. Educational and labour market indicators

The results which are summarised in section 2.1 were consistent with the outcomes of other studies (Quevedo, Salvà, 1997, Carbonero, 1998).

Again reflecting the findings of other studies as well as general trends, a breakdown of the figures by gender shows that young women are in a better position as far as education is concerned but in a worse position with respect to the principal labour market indicators.

Although available data do not suffice to fully clarify a number of the issues addressed by the study, a series of indicators was developed to pro-

vide an initial approach for the identification of territorial priorities. These are as follows ⁽¹⁰⁾:

The number of students failing to obtain a certificate of secondary education: 2 359 (27.05% of the total secondary school roll);

the number of students passing the certificate of secondary education but failing in a particular subject: 2 657 (30.68% of the total secondary school roll);

the number of students in the first cycle of compulsory secondary education ⁽¹¹⁾ failing to go on to the second cycle: 2 276 (20.53% of the total first-cycle roll);

the number of students in the first cycle of secondary education going on to the second cycle but failing in a given subject: 4 627 (41.74% of the total first-cycle roll);

the number of unemployed, broken down according to age and gender; unemployment rates, broken down according to age group and gender.

On the basis of these indicators and combinations thereof, the features of each island and municipal area were identified, comparisons were drawn and priorities set.

4.3. Available training provision

From the 1980s onwards, a series of measures have been implemented by the Spanish authorities to promote the transition of young people into working life, especially those coming out of compulsory education without the certificate of secondary education. As alternatives to formal education, the purpose of these measures is to deliver initial vocational training and upgrade initial training.

These measures originated in the Spanish government's Training, Workshop and Craft Centre Programme, launched in 1985 under the first national vocational training and employment plan (*Plan FIP*) which, subject to certain changes, is still in force today. Subsequently, the General Law on the Education System (LOGSE) of 1990 introduced the concept of 'social guarantee programmes', while legislation was adopted on various forms of contract, known as training contracts in their present form. Responsibility for these programmes initially lay with central government but, with the exception of the training contracts, the autonomous communities are now the competent bodies.

Figures for the social guarantee programmes show that the vast majority of participants in the predominantly school-based 'job induction' courses ⁽¹²⁾ are male (65.8% of a total of 701 in the reference year).

⁽¹⁰⁾ Academic year of reference: 1999/2000.

⁽¹¹⁾ Compulsory secondary education comprises two two-year cycles.

⁽¹²⁾ All social guarantee programmes provide for a vocational preparation element. The reference here is to one of the programme modalities or types known as "job induction courses".

Figures for the training workshops and craft centres show that young men are again well in the majority, the programme sponsors invariably being local authorities. These programmes have a lower level of participation (48 in the reference year) than the social guarantee programmes. Although figures are not broken down according to gender, the occupations are heavily male-oriented. On the basis of the results of a previous study (Quevedo, Salvà, 1998) and direct knowledge of the training workshops and craft centres, this points to the fact that, like the social guarantee programmes, the training workshops and craft centres mainly serve the male population.

Figures are only available for the training contracts and there is no information as to the actual training provided ⁽¹³⁾.

Although the *Plan FIP* is not specifically targeted to young people, most of the participants (2 461, representing 56.8% of the total) are under 30.

Over and above this provision, a number of measures in the region are co-funded by the European Social Fund (ESF). But as the figures are not broken down by age, it was only possible to identify how many under-29s were involved in a specific activity: 125 in 2000.

The Balearic government recently published a series of regulations which also relate more or less directly to this field. However no statistical information is as yet available.

4.4. Policy recommendations on training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level

This section follows on from and expands on section 4.1 in which the results of the first phase of the study were presented. It was drawn up following theoretical analysis and field work and focused on educational and labour market indicators and the various resources available.

Objectives, principles and lines of action

Policy relating to the employment of young people of low educational level is linked to two closely related factors, i.e. finding a job and vocational training. But these two factors are also part of wider-ranging processes that affect the present and future of young people. If we accept that it is necessary to improve the present status of young people as a means of improving their future status, the general objectives for any action targeted towards young people of low educational attainment will be:

- (a) steady employment,
- (b) a job which promotes the transition to adult life and social integration, and

⁽¹³⁾ A detailed study is discussed in the referenced article (Quevedo, Salvà, 1998).

(c) vocational training to at least level 1 ⁽¹⁴⁾ as a basis for ongoing life-long learning.

To achieve these objectives, the various governmental agencies and other players involved must liaise closely, thinking globally while acting locally; they must recognise the importance of ongoing improvements, draw on the know-how of specialised bodies, make use of young people's creative potential, ensure consistency between theory and practice in social policy, and take due account of gender and territorial considerations.

Areas of action

The study identified a total of 16 areas of action for the Balearic Islands, indicating priority action along with key management and organisational aspects in each case. The areas of action are as follows:

Area 1. Vocational qualifications and accreditation

Three recommendations:

- (a) draw up a list of level 1 vocational qualifications suitable for young people;
- (b) specify the training programme leading to these qualifications; and
- (c) define the criteria for their accreditation.

Area 2. Accreditation of centres specialised in the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level

Two proposals:

- (a) define the status of centres specialised in the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level, and
- (b) draw up the regulations for accreditation of these centres.

Area 3. Improving existing programmes

Existing programmes need to be made more effective. This can *inter alia* be achieved by extending these programmes to young people with difficulties and by taking account of gender. A number of essential improvements are in any case required to adjust the schedules and training courses to the realities of the relevant economic activity, and to improve the information compilation systems. It is also necessary to set up a committee for each programme which will design, monitor and assess the results of action plans in the short and medium term.

An essential improvement is a change in the training/work paradigm. Training and work should not be regarded as isolated activities occurring at specific moments in a person's life but, on the contrary, as a process which may assume a variety of forms.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Level 1 is the minimum recognised by the European Union. It is attained by a pass in the certificate of secondary education (currently 'graduate of secondary education'). There are also plans to make it possible to attain this level via specific forms of job-related training, to be regulated by the appropriate bodies.

Area 4. Converting training contracts into training programmes

Combining a job with technical and practical training can be highly effective under the right conditions. However this method is seldom used effectively, either in our own autonomous community or in Spain as a whole. Making the best use of this mode of training requires collaboration agreements between the agencies and establishments that implement youth projects, on the one hand, and the enterprises and sectoral employers' associations on the other.

Area 5. Upgrading guidance and counselling services

These services should be incorporated into the local committees referred to in connection with Area 13 and targeted towards young people at various stages of their development. A number of specific recommendations relate to the guidance and counselling services of centres and schools delivering compulsory secondary education and the creation of specialised guidance services.

Area 6. The social economy

Although not exclusively targeted towards young people, the measures proposed should also take account of the needs of young people of low educational level. We propose stepping up efforts in the field of sheltered employment and including relevant clauses in public authority contracts; moreover, youth employment firms should become legally independent.

Area 7. Work with employers

Three recommendations:

- (a) promote the use of cooperation contracts at various levels (sectoral union and employers' organisations, firms, etc.) between employers and agencies implementing youth employment projects;
- (b) establish a status for firms involved in youth employment projects;
- (c) define and publicise good practice.

Area 8. Work with young women of low educational level

This is essential for every area and every form of action. Proposals:

- (a) set specific objectives to incorporate the principle of gender equity into every action;
- (b) provide training on gender-related issues for trainers and project managers;
- (c) design and implement guidance modules and courses targeted towards young people;
- (d) valorise jobs traditionally carried out by women of low educational level and reduce horizontal and vertical segregation;
- (e) set up experimental projects with young single mothers;
- (f) set up experimental projects with young sex workers.

Area 9. Young people facing social exclusion

Training programmes should be more accessible to young people facing

social exclusion or social difficulties. The proposed lines of action include helping the authorities to introduce more flexibility and experimentation into ongoing projects, implementing plans and pilot projects targeted towards young immigrants from non-EU countries, and collaborating with bodies who work with young people and the socially excluded.

Area 10. Continuing training

This is one of the principal difficulties encountered by persons of low educational level. In our opinion, continuing training for this target group should be organised under the National Qualification System. Two proposals:

- (a) introduce continuing training into programmes and projects for young people of low educational level, and
- (b) convert existing provision into continuing training projects for the same target group.

Area 11. Programmes and measures for young people aged 21 to 30

Although the priority tends to be given to second chance schemes for 16 to 20-year-olds, a number of young people in the 20 to 30 age bracket also wish to return to formal education. Moreover, as the Balearic Islands show high dropout rates among 17 to 20 year-olds, second chance measures at this level are of strategic importance. The proposals in this area include:

- (a) adaptation of adult education programmes and tests for admittance to the formal education system,
- (b) promotion of experimental projects in this field,
- (c) consideration of the particular characteristics of these young people in the various measures, and
- (d) a study of their needs and of available provision.

Area 12. Training for trainers and managers

A plan of proposed activities and priorities should be drawn up. This should include a mobility programme, an annual meeting for an exchange of information and a discussion of innovations, working groups, training and accreditation for working with young people, as well as courses, workshops and seminars on various related topics.

Area 13. Creating local committees for the training, employment and social integration of young people

This proposal is based on the French model of *missions locales*, set up in response to the report by Bertrand Schwartz on the employment and social integration of young people (Schwartz, 1985) ⁽¹⁵⁾.

Area 14. Helping social integration

Helping young people achieve social integration cannot be divorced from

⁽¹⁵⁾ The *missions locales* provide young people with information, guidance and follow-up throughout the process of socio-occupational integration and offer assistance with the various problems encountered in the course of transition – training, qualifications, health, accommodation, access to cultural facilities and leisure time.

occupational integration; the proposed activities take account of both these aspects. The recommendations include a number of actions regarded as particularly relevant for the social integration of young people of low educational level:

- (a) use of the media to combat stereotyped concepts and images of young people and presentation of alternatives, and
- (b) adoption of integrated youth policies.

Area 15. Adopting efficient systems for the compilation and use of information

The inadequacy of current systems for the compilation and use of information was a constant problem throughout our study. Recommendations:

- (a) the establishment of indicators and
- (b) programme and project supervision and assessment.

Area 16. Administrative efficiency

Our recommendations imply radical changes in the current practice of the public administration. We emphasise the need to integrate the activities of the various bodies responsible for policy administration, to create a specialised unit and to provide training for technical and administrative personnel.

Establishing the priorities of these areas of action highlighted the importance of each of these fields. This reflects the broad consensus on the presented proposals expressed at all the meetings.

5. Conclusions

Given the nature of the study, some of its conclusions have already been touched upon under 'results' above, especially in the section on policy proposals. Nevertheless, and by means of conclusion, we would like to highlight the following aspects:

- a) A striking feature of educational participation is the high proportion of young people dropping out of the educational system without the secondary school leaving certificate, or at least without achieving a pass in all subjects. In terms of youth participation in the labour market, there is a lack of statistical data that would allow a territorial analysis. Yet such data, along with statistics from the education system, are indispensable if trends are to be evaluated and relevant policies implemented.
- b) Various aspects of policy are in need of improvement. These may be summarised as follows:
 - Resources must be planned from a global perspective, taking account of issues to be addressed, objectives pursued and extant

theoretical and practical knowledge. It is indispensable to apply EU guidelines, especially those set annually within the European employment strategy.

- Coherent policies and proper networking are necessary. This implies breaking down administrative barriers between areas (employment, education, youth, social services, etc.) and levels of the administration which hamper coherence. Local players (public administration, educational establishments, associations, etc.) have a central role to play in the design, implementation and evaluation of these policies.
- Evaluation systems must be rendered more effective. Programme evaluation at present does not identify results that need improvement. In some cases it is difficult or indeed impossible even to find relevant statistics.

c) On professional and specialised bodies, we note a high level of interest in and commitment to improving the programmes, as well as a broad consensus on the recommendations of this study.

The regional government's reaction to the study was also very positive, as evidenced *inter alia* by its publication in book form, the various information sessions organised on the subject and the incorporation of a number of our recommendations into government policy.

Nevertheless, our study merely represents the first stage towards the introduction of innovative policies for the dissemination of good practice in the field of the training, employment and social integration of young people of low educational level in our region. The adoption of our recommendations will require not only technical resources, but also political will – the political will to bring this issue forward, to address the problems related to vocational qualifications, to recognise the fundamental importance of quality, to work with those sectors showing the most pressing needs, to account for gender differences and to convince the public administration that all these recommendations can be made reality. ■

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