



EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF

young adultllt 

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS YOUNG ADULTS' DATA

This document presents preliminary findings related to context-specific living conditions of young adults at the regional level. In order to better inform policies, more effort is needed in developing richer context-based information at regional and local level. Identifying existing data gaps and improving the availability of territorial information for better targeted policy are crucial steps to improve nation-state based data.

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INTRODUCTION

Life-long learning (LLL) policies for young adults are the result of a complex interplay between economy, society, labour market, and education and training systems both at national, regional and local levels. In the YOUNG_ADULLLT project, a dedicated work package (WP4) explores systematically how these effects are enacted in the circumstances of young adults in nine European member states and eighteen functional regions, by collecting and analysing quantitative data on the specific living conditions of young adults in regional contexts. This is guided by two main research questions:

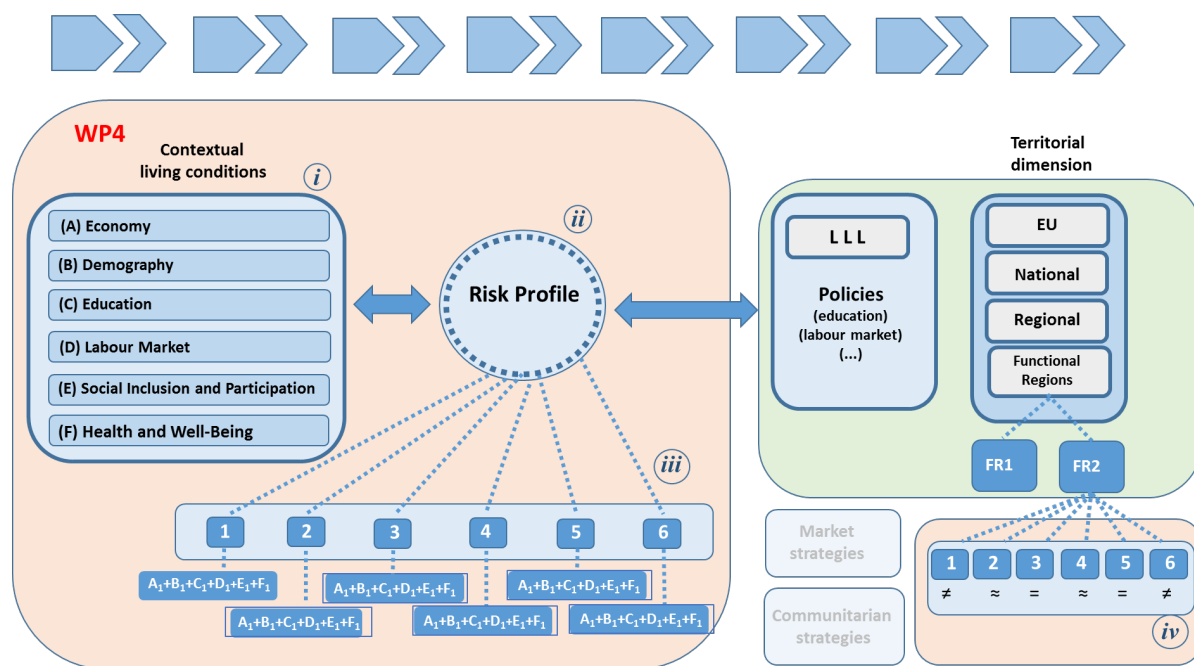
1. What data is available at a regional level about the living conditions of young adults and what are the gaps in data coverage?
2. What can available data reveal about the living conditions of young adults and the identification of risks profiles at regional level?

This research provides further quantitative context by drawing on sources available locally at regional level, about the mediating role of LLL policies in the configuration of individuals' living conditions (see **Figure 1** below). The approach focuses on the contextual living conditions in selected regions, according to a multidimensional approach that considers the level of economic development and material living conditions, demographic trends, the interaction between education systems and labour markets and the health coverage within a region. This does not imply a deterministic view where the context and structural factors completely prevail over individual agency and self-determination. However, it stresses the relevance of contextual living conditions in building different structures of opportunities for young people, in terms of complex mixes of enablements and constraints, according to the place where they live. The results contribute to build

the contextual structure of enablements and constraints with which young people engage and actively form their dispositions and choices.

The data collation draws on databases from national administrative sources and comparative surveys compiled by international organisations such as EUROSTAT and the OECD. It is divided into six dimensions: economic structure, demographics, education and training, labour markets, social inclusion and participation, and health and well-being. Data was collated for a 10-year span, from 2005 through 2014, the latest available data. This enables comparability across countries and regions, before and after the Great Recession. Young adults are defined as individuals aged between 18 and 29 years. However, a plurality of age ranges was used pragmatically to overcome data limitations.

Figure 1. Living conditions and risk profiles



DATA, EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

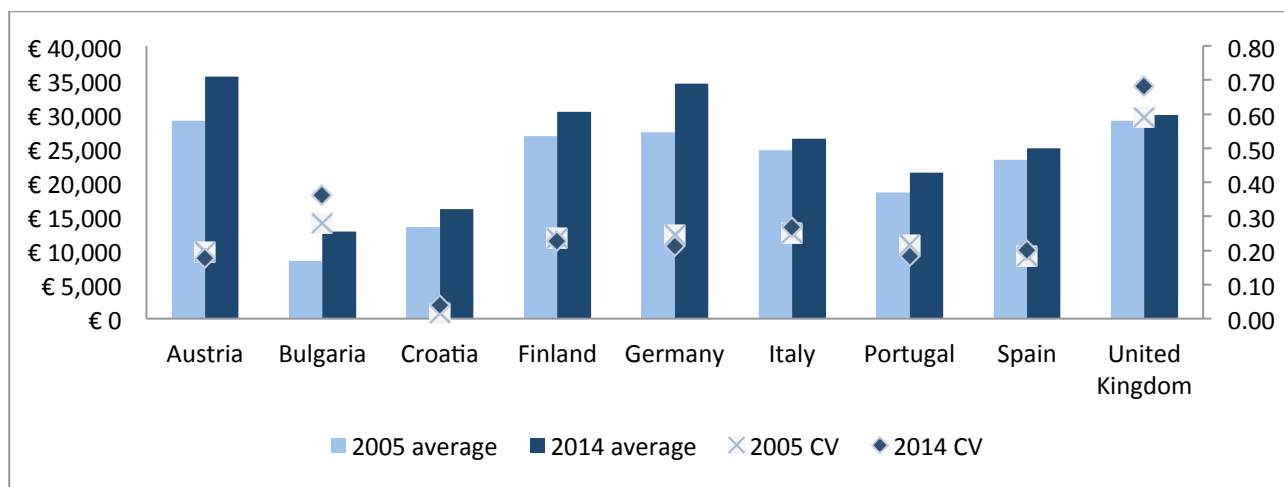
There are substantial limitations in the availability of complete information of young adults' living condition at sub-national and regional level. The EUROSTAT statistical information system, as most data sources, relies on limited administrative records with territorial disaggregation, mainly on the economics, demographics and health system. Few micro-data sources provide a scattered figure on territorial differences of young adults' living conditions, two important information sources being the European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Despite this substantial limitation for the production of regional indicators on young adults living conditions at regional/local level, YOUNG_ADULLLT explores the possibilities of modelling risk profiles at the level of Functional Regions (FR) as they partially correspond with the NUTS2 classification and some indicators are available at this level. However, deriving finer contextual-based measure of young adults and LLL policies in the European territories is particularly challenging, as few data are available at the NUTS3 level.

In this Policy Brief, we summarize preliminary results for four indicators about the living conditions of young adults such as: Gross Domestic Product (GDP); Early school leavers population 18-24 years; Population 30 and 34 years with ISCED 5-8; and Employment rate of the population 25-34

years. These will be used in conjunction with a range of further indicators to produce risk profiles across selected regions.

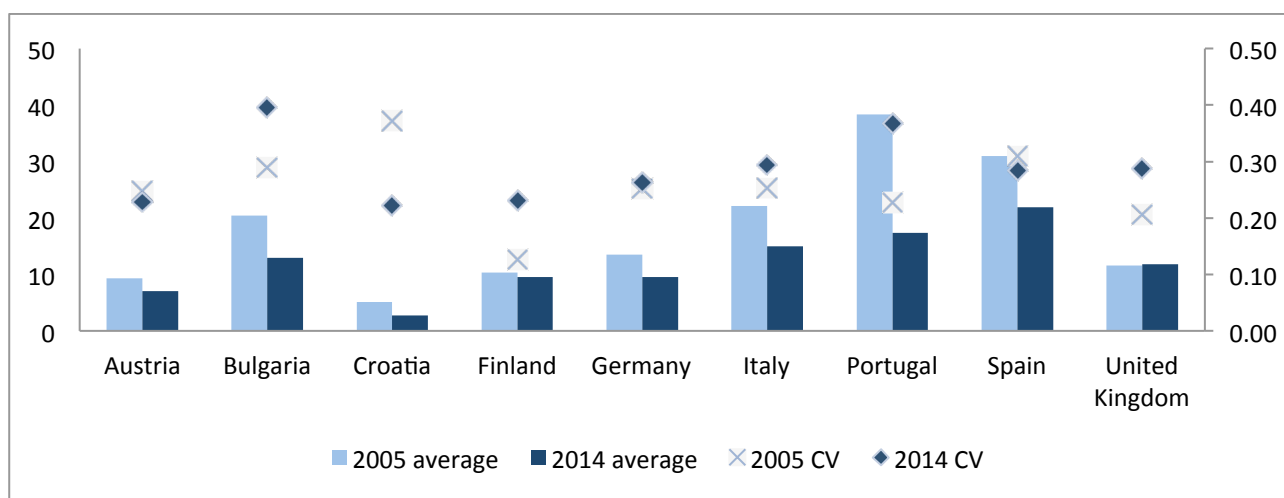
Figure 2. Gross Domestic Product (GDP) at current market prices, Euros per inhabitant, country average (left axis) and coefficient of variation, 2005-2014 (right axis).



Note: The bars represent the average GDP at current market prices, Euro per inhabitant in standard units. The dots indicate the coefficient of variation, which is a measure of entropy. It represents the variation across territorial units in the countries selected.

Figure 2 plots the GDP per inhabitant for the nine countries selected in YOUNG_ADULLLT. GDP shows important cross-country differences, but there is also an important territorial variation at the national level in the single countries. The coefficient of variation reached 0.68 in UK in 2014, while for Croatia it was 0.04 in the same period. For the case of UK, there is high variation in the economic prosperity at territorial level. Moreover, the UK was, alongside Austria, the country with the highest GDP per inhabitant in 2005. Whilst the UK grew 3% over the period, GDP per inhabitant in Austria grew 22% in the same period. All the participating countries have experienced GDP growth; however, Austria, Finland, Germany and Portugal have also reduced inequality across their territories.

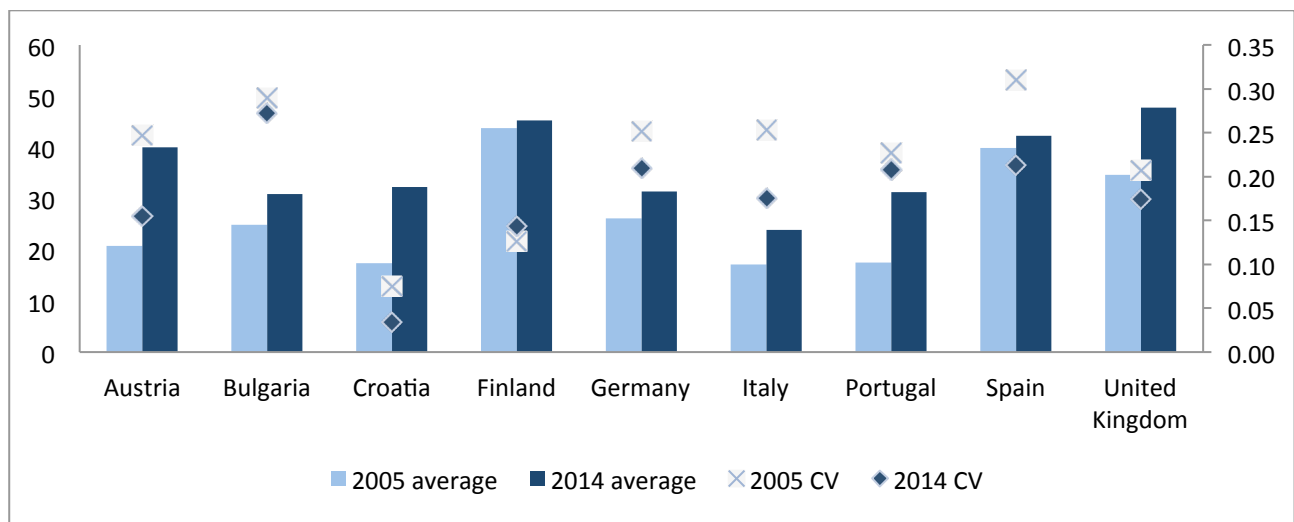
Figure 3. Early school leavers, 18-24 years, country average and coefficient of variation, 2005-2014.



Note: The bars represent the average percentage of early school leavers. The dots indicate the coefficient of variation, which is a measure of dispersion. It represents the variation across territorial units in the countries selected. When reference year data were unavailable, data on closer year were used. This is the case for Croatia in most of the results showed in this report.

Figure 3 plots the national shares of early school leavers and the corresponding inequality across the regions of the YOUNG_ADULLLT countries. This is a widely used measure and one of the key indicators of Europe 2020. Spain, Portugal, Italy lag behind EU partners with more than 15% of the population aged between 18 and 24 having left education. The share of school leavers in Portugal is still high in 2015, but much reduced by 21 percentage points from 2004. Similarly, in Spain the share of school leavers dropped by 9 percentage points. The only countries where this indicator remained almost stable (at a relatively low level) are Finland and UK. However, there is relevant variation across regions, which ranged between 0.23 in Austria and Finland to 0.4 in Bulgaria. These differences increased over the last decade in most of the countries; it decreased slightly in Austria and Spain, but only in Croatia it was reduced by 60%, reaching 0.22 in 2014. Territorial differences in early school leavers increased substantially in Bulgaria, Finland and Portugal with more than 0.11 increase in the coefficient of variation in the last decades.

Figure 4. Population with ISCED 5-8 (30-34 years), total %, country average and coefficient of variation, 2005-2014.



Note: The bars represent the average percentage of population, which has attained ISCED 5-8. The dots indicate the coefficient of variation, which is a measure of dispersion. It represents the variation across territorial units in the countries selected. When reference year data were unavailable, data on closer year were used. This is the case for Croatia in most of the results showed in this report.

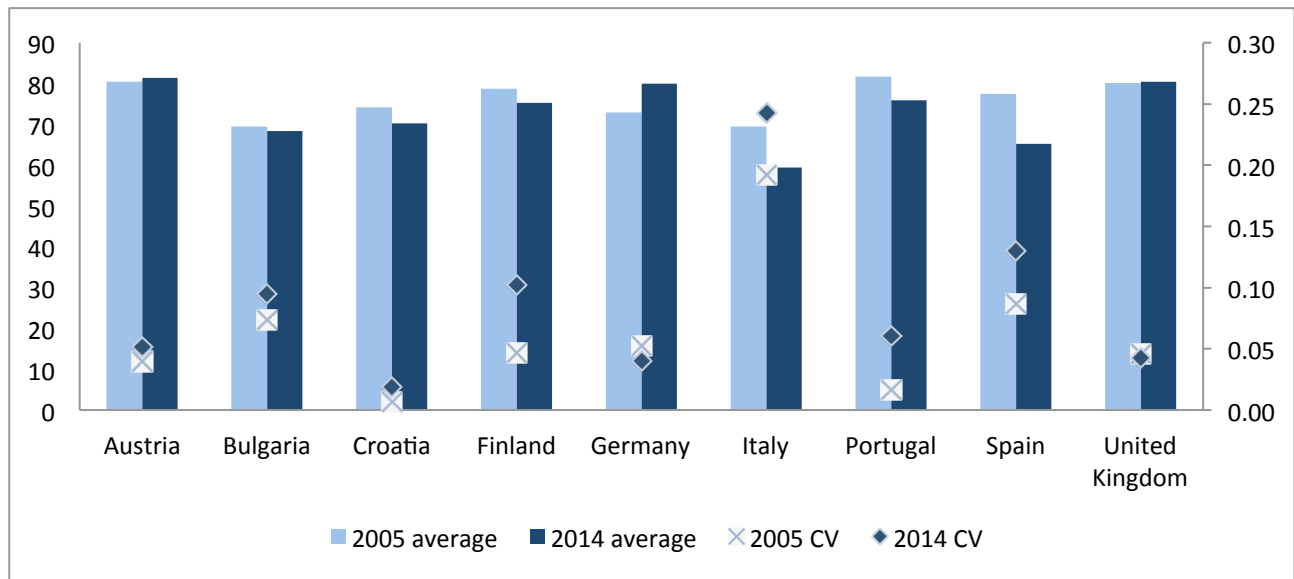
Figure 4 plots the percentage of population aged between 30 and 34 years, which have attained tertiary education (ISCED 5-8) and the corresponding inequality across the regions of the 9 countries selected. This proxy is a measure of the attainment and level of education of the population in the territorial units. This is a widely used measure included in the key indicators of Europe 2020, targeted to the age group, which is likely to have achieved the highest education level.

In 2014, in UK, Finland, Spain and Austria more than 2 out of 5 people aged between 30 and 34 attained tertiary education, while in Italy it was slightly higher than 1 out of 5 young people. There is a general increase in the tertiary education attainment of the countries examined. Over the period, the increase was modest in Finland (+1.6%) and larger in Austria (19.3%). However, there is some sign of reduction of inequality in 7 out of 9 countries, Croatia and Finland excluded, the coefficient of variation ranging between 0.03 in Croatia until 0.27 in Bulgaria.

Figure 5 plots the percentage of employed population aged between 25 and 34 years over the last decade and the corresponding inequality across the regions of the 9 countries selected. This proxy is a measure of the labour market conditions in the territorial units proxying the degree of access to employment for the young adults.

In 2014, in Austria, Germany and UK 4 out of 5 people aged between 25 and 34 years were employed, while in countries such as Spain, Bulgaria or Italy slightly more than 3 out of 5 were employed. Over the period, the consequences of the Great Recession were evident for countries such as Italy and Spain (-10% approx.), and less for Portugal (-5%) while positive trend was registered in Germany (+7%). However, over the period there is sign of increasing territorial variation in employment rate except for the case of Germany (-0.1). The peak of variation in young adults' employment rate reached 0.24 in Italy and 0.13 in Spain, while the lowest observed in Croatia 0.02.

Figure 5. Employment rate of 25-34 year olds (left axis) and coefficient of variation (right axis), 2005-2014.

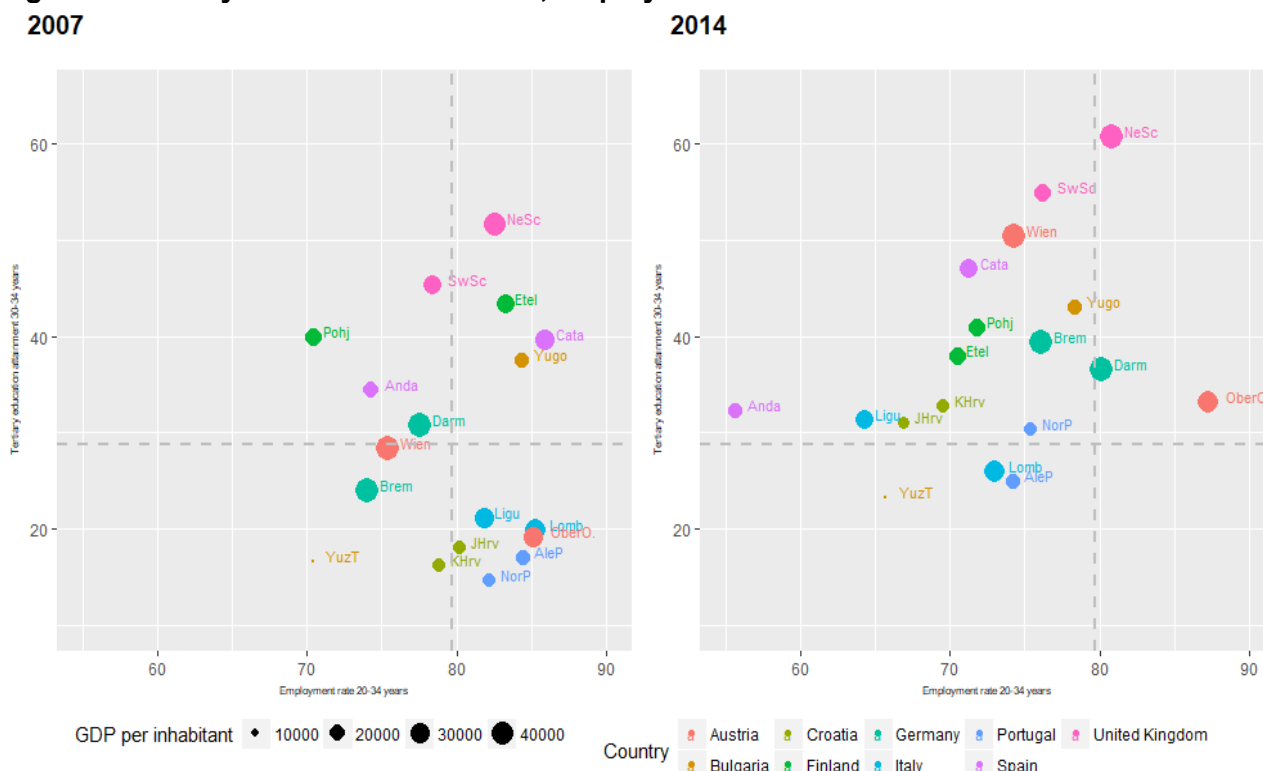


Note: The bars represent the average percentage of population employed aged between 15 and 24 years. The dots indicate the coefficient of variation, which is a measure of entropy. It represents the variation across territorial units in the countries selected. When reference year data were unavailable, data on closer year were used. This is the case for Croatia in most of the results showed in this report.

Figure 6 shows the relationship between education attainment and employment rate of the young adults during the time-span 2007-2014. A general increase in tertiary education attainment among young adults aged 30-34 is particularly pronounced in the regions of Wien and Darmstadt, but it is also present in the regions of South Western and Eastern Scotland, Bremen, Continental and Adriatic Croatia and Catalonia. On the other hand, due the impact of the economic crisis, many regions experienced a steep increase in youth unemployment. This was more pronounced in the South and East European regions. A decreasing trend can be observed in the German regions of Darmstadt and Bremen and in Upper Austria, while youth unemployment in the Finnish region of Pohjois-Suomi and in the Austrian regions of Wien remained stable or slightly decreased. As a result of the trends described, **Figure 6** shows that some regions combine an above-the-average level of youth unemployment coupled with a low educational attainment. This is the case of Andalusia, Liguria, Continental and Adriatic Croatia and Yuzhen Tzentralen. Lombardia and the two Portuguese regions (Alentejo and Norte) share with this group a similar level of educational attainment, but show more favourable labour market conditions, as youth unemployment is lower. A second major group is made up by regions with medium-high levels of educational attainment coupled with medium and medium-low unemployment rates. Some of these regions have been affected by the economic crisis, but still the youth conditions on the labour market is comparatively favourable. It is the case of the Scottish, German and Finnish regions, together with Catalonia and Yugozapaden. Upper Austria is characterized by low levels of youth unemployment but also a comparatively medium-low level of tertiary education attainment. Regions with a higher GDP per

inhabitant show better employment conditions for young adults, while the level of tertiary education appears to be less relevant. This shows that the outcomes of the education system have not a direct link on economic growth and are connected to long-term trends and institutional structures. For instance, the region of Lombardia combines a medium-high GDP and unemployment with low educational attainment; while the Yuzzapaden region combines less favourable economic conditions with a higher diffusion of tertiary educated among young people and a lower unemployment. Conversely, the youth unemployment rate is more sensible to the economic cycle, as it is generally higher in countries where the economic crisis had a major impact.

Figure 6. Tertiary education attainment, employment rate and GDP between 2007 and 2014.



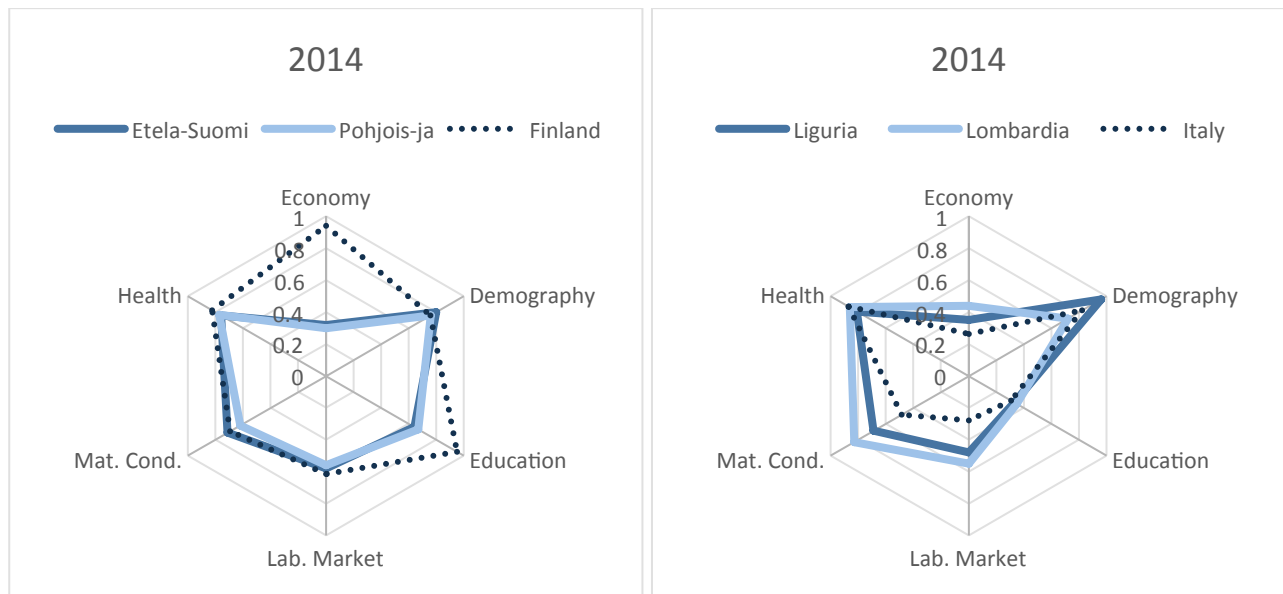
Note: **Figure 6** shows the relationship and the evolution of the selected regions between 2007 and 2014. Both axes in the graphs are centred at 2007 values, this means that the origin of the graph represents the mean both for education attainment and employment rate. The size of the dots represents the values of the GDP at regional level in PPP.

Figure 7 shows the contextual living conditions for Finnish and Italian regions selected for 2014. All the dimensions plotted in the radars are composite indicators of young adults' living conditions in different national and (sub-national) regional contexts. This is an example of the approach graphically shown in **Figure 1** in order to reveal the contextual living conditions of young adults. It combines multivariate statistical techniques with the results of the national briefing papers. Results show that both Italian regions (Liguria and Lombardia) score considerably higher compared to the country level profile, confirming the existence of strong territorial based inequalities. These two northern regions show a medium-level of labour market integration (0.48 for Liguria and 0.55 for Lombardia) and a medium-low level of educational opportunities (0.33 for Liguria and 0.35 for Lombardia), in contrast with low or very low scores at the country level. The two Finnish regions of Etelä-Suomi and Pohjois-ja Itä-Suomi show quite similar profiles of contextual living conditions, being quite consistent with the scores at national level. Only in the Economy and Education dimensions the two regions score quite lower than the Finnish average. They also maintain a similar profile to the pre-crisis level with low levels of poverty and exclusion.

All in all, among the regions selected in YOUNG_ADULLLT, both Finnish regions represent a context which is characterised by quite favourable living conditions with a stable profile in the last

decade although they are relatively poorer in terms of economic and education levels, while the two Italian regions have higher levels compared to their country, but they score poorly in education and labour market integration with a downward pattern over the last decade. Additional results on cross-national, cross-regional results could be found in the International Report of WP4 YOUNG_ADULLLT project together with a detailed explanation of the construction of the composite indicators. This is an example of an approach which aims at improving the use and interpretation of existing comparative datasets at regional level.

Figure 7. Contextual living conditions of young adults in Italy, Finland and selected regions 2014.



Note: **Figure 7** shows a radar diagram for two selected regions in Italy and Finland and their country average for 2014. The six dimensions plotted, represent composite indicators of young adults' living conditions, ranging from 0 to 1.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LLL policies are the result of a complex interaction with the social and economic contexts in which they are implemented, and with the respective social actors. The success of any political reform depends largely on how these aspects are structured. These preliminary results show that GDP, educational attainment and employment rates are strongly associated according to different patterns. Similar levels of GDP per capita correspond to varying levels of attainment at regional level. There seems to be some correlation between educational attainment and employment rates, but Andalusia and Upper Austria (OberO) are clearly two outliers among the selected regions. There are huge differences both in the level and dispersion across European territories in young adults' living conditions. Moreover, the economic downturn has reinforced these differences for the regions analysed. Unfortunately, this evidence is partial and could rely on very limited comparative information.

To better inform policies, an intense effort is needed in order to develop richer context-based information at the different territorial levels (both and NUTS2 and NUTS3). A comprehensive integration and analysis of multi-source data at the different levels of analysis is a hard goal to accomplish; however, the need and relevance of contextualised data at regional and local level could produce a full picture of the risk profiles related to the living conditions of young people in different European regions. This is the approach used in the WP4 of the YOUNG_ADULLLT

project, where many regional indicators on the six dimensions we identified (see **Figure 1**) are combined in order to produce synthetic measures of living conditions of young adults.

Highlighting existing data gaps and improving the availability and accessibility of territorial information for better targeted policies are crucial steps to improve nation-state based measures. Due to changing realities, such as internationalisation, Europeanization and globalisation processes, the use of the national-level as a representative unit of account should be questioned and more context-sensitive localised proxies could be useful tools to describe changing social contexts.

Indeed, there is the need for increasing our understanding of the contexts within which measures are implemented. This calls for more contextualized information which is a prerequisite for regional comparative analysis and a more targeted and evidence-based policy. Moreover, in order to develop a broader interpretative framework, it is necessary to tap new data sources that are not strictly based on existing measures of education and labour market status. The availability of information related to dimensions such as housing, social and political participation, individual well-being, relational and vital space and skills are needed for the construction of a more fine-grained analysis of the indicators of contextual living conditions. A holistic approach of living conditions is needed particularly in a time of socio-economic changes and reconfiguration of young adults' motivations and aspirations.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The research project YOUNG_ADULLLT departs from the observation of a high fragmentation and persistent weakness and ineffectiveness of adult education policies across Europe. It set out to enquire into the specific forms of embeddedness of these policies in the regional economy, the labour market, the education and training systems and the individual life projects of young adults. The focus is on lifelong learning policies aimed at creating economic growth and social inclusion that target young adults in vulnerable positions, for instance those not in education, employment or training (short: NEETs) or those in situations of near social exclusion.

The research project uses three different entry points:

- On an *institutional* level, YOUNG_ADULLLT starts by focusing on various lifelong learning policies (LLL) and analyses their potentially competing (and possibly ambivalent) orientations and objectives;
- On an *individual* level, the project focuses on the young adults' perceptions and expectations of these policies regarding their life projects. The objective is to yield insights into how the young peoples' life courses are impacted by these policies in terms of intended and unintended effects;
- On a *structural* level, YOUNG_ADULLLT aims to critically analyse current developments of LLL policies in Europe to prevent ill-fitted policies from further exacerbating existing imbalances and disparities as well as at identifying best practices and patterns of coordinated policy-making at regional/local landscapes.

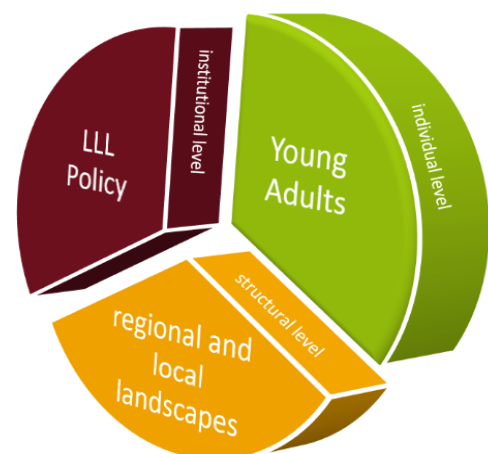


Figure 1. YOUNG_ADULLLT's thematic entry points and analytical dimensions.

The research project contributes, first, new knowledge on the impact of LLL policies on young adults' life courses, identifying the conditions, strategies, and necessities for policies to become effective. Second, the project provides insights on the innovations and potentials they unlock, with

view to informal and non-formal learning to better address vulnerable groups. Third, the research contributes to a better understanding of the structural relationships and functional match between education and training and the labour market sectors. Fourth, in order to do so, we will provide a thorough review of regional policies and initiatives in the countries studied, identifying best practices and patterns of coordinated policy-making at local and regional levels.

In order to do so, the research project YOUNG_ADULLLT compares 9 different countries in the EU: Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Finland, Italy, Germany, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. To analyse the embeddedness of the LL policies, the research brings together institutional and policy analyses. YOUNG_ADULLLT brings together a broad variety of methods using a multi-method multi-level research design to grasp the interaction of the three analytical levels – structural, institutional and individual. We pay particular focus on qualitative research with young adults, employers and trainers/providers of education and training, complemented by quantitative analysis of the young adults’ living conditions across Europe. Moreover, the research in YOUNG_ADULLLT provides an in-depth case-study analysis of selected policies and regional/local landscapes within the project.

The results shown in this document are drawn from a work package 4 (WP4) (Quantitative Analysis Young Adults’ Data), which provides a basis for assessing the articulation between lifelong learning policies and young adults’ experience. The quantitative analysis of young adults’ social and living conditions were collated from different data sources. It develops a complex framework in order to inform about the contextual dimensions that correlate with the production of different risk profiles. The approach is based on six dimensions: economic, demographic, education and training, labour market, social inclusion and participation, and health and well-being. The data are collated from national administrative sources and comparative surveys compiled by international organisations such as the EU and the OECD. The research uses harmonized quantitative data about the mediating role of LLL policies in the configuration of individuals living conditions, but it gets as close as possible to the regional level using pre-existing datasets. Additionally, it explores data gaps in the European Statistical Systems in order to complement those data with context specific information.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	Policies Supporting Young People in their Life Course. A Comparative Perspective of Lifelong Learning and Inclusion in Education and Work in Europe (YOUNG_ADULLLT)
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University of Genoa – UNIGE – Genoa, Italy
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DURATION

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BUDGET

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WEBSITE

<http://young-adulllt.eu/>

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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FURTHER READING

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