

EDULAB

European Youth in Transition to
Education and Labour



Methodological overview; draft outline of the concluding book; drafts of Policy Briefs, Discussion Notes, Newsletters 1 & 2 and further promotion materials (Composite deliverable, Year One)

D5.1A Annotated outline of the concluding summarizing monograph on methodology and main project results

D5.1B First annual set of policy/practice recommendations, Policy Briefs and Discussion Notes that illustrate and support major project outcomes
(Sample for Year One)

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Purpose and scope of the deliverable

This composite deliverable sets out the initial integrative outputs of WP5 (**“Research synthesis, integration and recommendations for politics and practice”**) and provides the foundation for the project’s overarching synthesis and policy communication strategy. It serves several purposes. The paper starts with an overview of methodological foundations of the work package and a brief account of effort delivered during the first year of project implementation, along with a summary of WP5 prospects for the next two years. Second, it presents an annotated outline of the concluding summarising volume (initially conceived as a monograph and subsequently developed as an edited volume) that will bring together the main methodological approaches and key results of EDU-LAB across all work packages. Third, it compiles the first annual set of policy- and practice-oriented materials and discussion notes that translate emerging project insights into accessible formats for different stakeholder groups. In doing so, the deliverable documents how WP5 begins to connect theoretical and empirical work with policy and practice debates at European, national and local levels.

The scope of D5.1 includes, on the one hand, the structured outline of the book, including its rationale, provisional chapter structure, and the allocation of responsibilities across work packages and authors (D5.1A). This outline does not present final results but clarifies the intended analytical architecture of the volume, the main thematic blocks and the ways how theoretical considerations, empirical findings and youth perspectives will be integrated. On the other hand, the deliverable brings together the first-year set of policy briefs, discussion notes, and good-practice examples prepared by the consortium (D5.1B). These materials provide early reflections on policy and practice implications based on the work conducted so far in WPs 1–4, while explicitly acknowledging the preliminary character of the evidence at this stage of the project.

The deliverable is intended to guide both internal and external audiences. Internally, it offers a shared reference point for WP leaders and partners regarding the future synthesis work in WP5 and the expected contributions to the concluding volume. Externally, it offers stakeholders, including policymakers, practitioners and representatives of civil society, a first structured view of the project’s emerging messages, formats and channels for outreach. As a Year One composite deliverable, D5.1 should therefore be read as a living framework that will be refined and expanded in subsequent reporting periods, rather than as a definitive statement of project findings or final recommendations.

The deliverable D5.1B presents a series of collectively produced drafts of shorter dissemination and promotion materials from several individual work packages that shall be used in an intensive information campaign in early 2026.

Furthermore, we attach a sample of two project’s Newsletters, namely NL-1 (produced in June 2025 and widely disseminated in the fall that year), as well as an advanced draft of NL-2 that shall be actively communicated starting from January 2026.

List of work packages in EDU-LAB project

WP1	Modelling pathways and transitions in GE and PVET and to the labour market
WP2	Efficiency assessment of policies and investments in GE and PVET
WP3A	Targeted analysis of quantitative data in EEA
WP3B	OSSES - International expert survey
WP4	Hearing young people’s voices: Qualitative Case Studies
WP5	Research synthesis, integration and recommendations for politics and practice
WP6	Frameworks for the dissemination, exploitation and outreach activities
WP7	Project and consortium coordination, management and ethics issues

Document history

Version	Date	Description
0.1	16 June 2025	First advanced draft outline of the edited volume (D5.1A) produced and circulated to WP Leaders (Task 5.1.2)
0.2	26 November 2025	Revised outline of the edited volume (D5.1A) prepared following internal discussions and PMB-IX decisions
0.3	10 December 2025	Consolidated outline of the edited volume (D5.1A) integrating comments from WP Leaders and PMB
1.0 (final)	19 December 2025	Final version of the edited volume outline (D5.1A) approved by PMB and Coordinator and included in Deliverable D5.1 for submission

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1. Introductory notes: Foundations of WP5

WP5 provides the integrative infrastructure for the entire project. Its purpose is to consolidate evidence from all work packages, identify patterns that transcend disciplinary or methodological boundaries, and develop a coherent analytical framework for understanding youth pathways and transitions in Europe. WP5 also supports the translation of research into accessible guidance for policymakers, practitioners and other stakeholders through discussion notes, policy briefs, and structured reporting.

1.1. Methodological overview

The role of WP5 in EDU-LAB

WP5 performs four core functions. First, it synthesises conceptual, empirical and policy insights from WPs 1–4. Second, it structures the project’s overall analytical narrative through the design of the concluding edited volume. Third, it coordinates the communication of preliminary findings through Year One policy and practice materials. Fourth, it ensures that methodological alignment and thematic coherence are maintained throughout the project, enabling cumulative learning. WP5’s work is iterative: early synthesis is necessarily provisional, but its structure shapes the way later evidence will be interpreted and integrated.

WP5 must therefore maintain a dynamic overview of all project activities. It must identify potential complementarities across datasets, conceptual frameworks and empirical approaches. It must also recognise areas where findings diverge or raise unresolved questions. By doing so, WP5 creates a shared intellectual space in which theoretical models, policy analysis, expert perspectives and youth experiences can be meaningfully compared.

Integrating multi-method evidence

Integration requires more than just posing results. It demands a conceptual architecture that can accommodate different types of evidence. WP1 provides modelling approaches and conceptual distinctions that clarify categories such as pathways, transitions, intersectional determinants, and institutional factors. WP2 identifies policy frameworks that shape opportunities and constraints for young people. WP3A supplies empirical patterns and cross-national variation. WP3B offers expert assessments of emerging risks, system strengths and weaknesses. WP4 will contribute interpretive depth grounded in youth experiences. WP5 must connect these layers.

The integrative approach is therefore guided by three principles: coherence, complementarity and comparative perspective. Coherence requires a shared vocabulary and consistent analytical units. Complementarity means that the strengths of one WP compensate for the limitations of another. Comparative perspective ensures that evidence is interpreted with attention to diversity across systems, regions and populations.

Conceptual pillars for synthesis

WP5 builds on a set of conceptual pillars drawn primarily from WP1 and aligned with EU policy frameworks. These include the notions of pathways as structured trajectories, transitions as decision points or shifts between systems or statuses, and intersectionality as a framework for understanding how multiple characteristics combine to influence outcomes. Institutional arrangements, governance structures, labour-market regimes, and socio-economic contexts form the backdrop against which these processes unfold. These pillars allow WP5 to examine how structural features interact with individual experiences and policy interventions.

Even in Year One, areas of convergence are emerging. Dataset limitations identified in WP1 and WP3A highlight gaps that constrain policy evaluation in WP2 and the interpretation of expert views in WP3B. WP2’s findings on fragmented governance resonate with WP3B’s assessments of system incoherence. WP3B’s emphasis on psychological and cultural dimensions anticipates themes likely to appear in WP4. WP5 monitors these points of convergence to prepare the foundations for more comprehensive synthesis in Year Two.

1.2. Analytical structure for Year One

Relationship between D5.1A and D5.1B

D5.1A presents the annotated outline of the edited volume, setting out its conceptual rationale, provisional chapter structure and intended analytical flow. It reflects WP5's early work in designing a coherent synthesis product. D5.1B compiles the first-year discussion notes and policy-oriented materials based on emerging insights from WPs 1–4. Together, these deliverables signal the direction of the final synthesis while acknowledging the preliminary status of evidence.

Guiding principles for the edited volume

The edited volume aims to provide a comprehensive, multi-method account of youth pathways and transitions in Europe. It must articulate a conceptual foundation, analyse policy environments, describe empirical patterns, interpret expert views, and present youth perspectives. The volume is structured to move from concept to evidence to policy, establishing logical connections across chapters. Year One work focuses on clarifying this structure.

Cross-cutting themes emerging from WPs 1–4

Preliminary work suggests several themes likely to shape later synthesis. These include the influence of institutional design on transition opportunities, the persistent importance of socio-economic background, the effects of digital transformation, and the challenges posed by fragmented governance. Data gaps also appear repeatedly, suggesting the need for more coordinated approaches to data collection and longitudinal tracking.

Preparations for Year Two synthesis work

WP5 is preparing for deeper synthesis by refining analytical frameworks, aligning definitions across WPs and identifying areas requiring additional evidence. The integration of WP4 findings will be a major focus, as youth perspectives will add experiential depth to quantitative and policy-driven analyses. WP5 will also develop comparative typologies and analytical models to be elaborated in Years Two and Three.

1.3. The Integrative Role of WP5 in the EDU-LAB Project

WP5 is designed as the analytical and conceptual centre of the EDU-LAB project. It is responsible for integrating the diverse forms of evidence produced across WPs 1–4 and organising these findings into a coherent narrative that can support policy development, academic understanding and stakeholder engagement. This module provides ISAB members with a detailed account of WP5's operational logic, methodological approach and long-term analytical trajectory. It also explains how WP5 lays the intellectual groundwork for the edited volume and for the policy communication tasks that will materialise in later reporting periods.

The integrative ambition of WP5 requires an approach that is both systematic and adaptive. Youth transitions are shaped by multiple determinants -individual, social, institutional and structural- and the evidence relating to these determinants arises from different types of research. It is therefore essential for WP5 to coordinate conceptual frameworks, methodological choices and interpretive strategies across WPs. Because each WP uses different data sources, research designs and disciplinary assumptions, WP5 must establish common languages, comparable analytical units and overarching interpretive principles. This integration cannot be achieved retrospectively; it must evolve in parallel with each WP's progress.

WP5 is structured around two main tasks in Year One. First, it develops the annotated outline for the concluding edited volume. This outline is not a descriptive list of chapters but an analytical blueprint that determines how the entire project will culminate in a final synthesis. Second, WP5 compiles and organises the first annual set of discussion notes and policy-relevant materials. These notes represent the earliest synthesis artefacts: they translate emerging findings from each WP into preliminary insights, identify policy implications still in embryonic form and reveal gaps in evidence that must be filled during later phases. The combined output of these two tasks marks the beginning of a cumulative process in which synthesis is refined, expanded and validated.

The interdisciplinary nature of the project demands a specific structure of integration. WP1 provides the theoretical and modelling tools through which pathways and transitions can be conceptualised. These tools include typologies of determinants and transitions, structural and probabilistic frameworks, and a systematic examination of available datasets. WP2 contributes a detailed review of policy landscapes in the EDU-LAB countries, identifying governance structures, investment patterns and areas of fragmentation that condition youth transitions. WP3A provides empirical patterns derived from datasets, while WP3B documents expert perceptions of system-level strengths, weaknesses and future risks. WP4, which will begin substantive fieldwork in Year Two, will add a crucial interpretive layer by documenting the lived experiences of young people navigating these systems. WP5 must therefore prepare to integrate data-driven insights, policy analyses, expert assessments and youth narratives into a single analytical architecture.

The conceptual work conducted in WP5 during Year One focuses on establishing the foundational logic for this integration. Key building blocks include the clarification of analytical categories such as access, participation, progression, completion and early labour-market outcomes. WP5 must ensure that such categories are consistently defined across WPs, enabling comparability between quantitative datasets, policy frameworks, expert interviews and qualitative findings. This is particularly important because discrepancies in terminology or analytical scope can create misunderstandings or lead to incompatible interpretations. For example, what WP3A considers a transition may differ from how WP4 participants experience a transition; WP5's role is to articulate the relationship between these perspectives.

Another essential part of WP5's work is identifying the tensions, complementarities and gaps between WPs. These become visible early. WP1 and WP3A both highlight the fragmentary and uneven nature of available data. WP2 documents governance fragmentation, which resonates strongly with WP3B's expert interviews describing disconnection and weak coordination between actors. WP3B's emphasis on psychological and cultural dimensions of transitions foreshadows themes likely to appear in WP4. These areas of alignment help WP5 identify which conceptual threads will bind the synthesis together. Conversely, points of divergence signal areas where additional interpretation or empirical clarification will be required.

A major responsibility of WP5 is organising the structure of the edited volume. The edited volume is not a mere collection of chapters but the intellectual backbone of the project's final output. It must achieve several objectives simultaneously: articulate the conceptual foundations of youth transitions, situate them within European policy debates, present empirical analyses, incorporate expert knowledge, give voice to young people and ultimately propose a comprehensive synthesis and policy-oriented roadmap. The sequence of chapters must therefore follow a logical progression from conceptual framing through empirical examination to integrative synthesis and future-oriented guidance.

The outline prepared in Year One defines this sequence. It ensures that each WP contributes in a structured manner and that the final volume reflects both the diversity of research approaches and the unity of the analytical project. WP5 anticipates that maintaining this structure will require continuous refinement as new evidence becomes available. Nevertheless, the outline serves as a shared intellectual contract across teams, aligning expectations and clarifying responsibilities.

Another key aspect of WP5's function is the formulation of early policy-relevant outputs. Discussion notes developed in D5.1B are deliberately modest in scope, as they are based on emerging, incomplete evidence. They are not intended to present firm conclusions but to identify trends, raise questions and highlight potential directions for policy reflection. These notes also reveal gaps that need to be addressed in later research. For instance, WP1 and WP3A identify major data gaps in areas such as digital literacy, longitudinal tracking and cross-national comparability. WP2 shows that policy effectiveness is often limited by structural issues beyond the reach of individual programmes. WP3B reveals that experts perceive systemic misalignment between education and labour markets. These findings point toward larger analytical questions and help WP5 develop a forward-looking synthesis plan.

The integration of WP4 findings remains a future challenge, but WP5 is already laying the groundwork. Qualitative evidence will provide insights into how young people navigate systems, interpret opportunities and experience inequalities. These perspectives are essential to contextualise and humanise the quantitative

and policy analyses. WP5 must therefore prepare interpretive frameworks capable of connecting structural determinants to lived experience and of showing how institutional arrangements translate into constraints or opportunities for individuals.

One of WP5's methodological priorities is developing comparative typologies. These typologies are not static country classifications but analytical tools to understand how education and labour-market systems shape young people's trajectories. They may draw on dimensions such as equity, efficiency, resilience, institutional coherence and labour-market alignment. WP5 anticipates that typologies will help integrate the diverse findings across WPs, identify cross-country clusters and reveal structural mechanisms that generate divergent transition outcomes.

WP5 must also address methodological limitations. The uneven availability of longitudinal data, definitional inconsistencies across datasets, the limited comparability of national statistics, and the divergence between expert perceptions and empirical trends all pose challenges to synthesis. WP5 therefore works with the assumption that some findings will remain uncertain or contested. The edited volume must reflect this uncertainty in an academically rigorous way, avoiding overgeneralisation while still providing meaningful insights for policy and practice.

WP5 also plays a central role in framing the project's contribution to European policy debates. The edited volume and subsequent discussion notes must not only present evidence but also speak to priorities such as strengthening vocational pathways, addressing skills shortages, improving guidance, fostering social inclusion and enhancing system resilience. WP5, therefore, prepares to translate research findings into clear, usable orientations for policymakers, without compromising analytical complexity.

The work taking place in Year One, lays the conceptual, organisational and methodological basis for more extensive synthesis work in Years Two and Three.

1.4. Cross-cutting themes and emerging hypotheses for WP5

The Year One work of WPs 1–4, as summarised in Deliverables 5.1A and 5.1B, already points to a series of cross-cutting themes that will shape WP5's synthesis activities. These themes are not yet formalised as results, but they constitute working hypotheses about how European education and labour-market systems structure youth transitions. Making these hypotheses explicit at this stage is useful for at least three reasons. First, it helps coordinate analytical work across WPs by indicating which relationships are likely to be of central interest. Second, it allows WP5 to plan data needs and modelling approaches for subsequent phases. Third, it provides a clear basis for feedback from the ISAB, which can challenge, refine or reorient these early interpretations.

A first cross-cutting theme concerns the importance of institutional coherence. Evidence from WP2 and WP3B suggests that where responsibilities for youth transitions are fragmented across ministries, agencies and levels of government, young people experience more complex and uncertain pathways. Programmes may overlap or compete rather than complement one another, guidance may be inconsistent and accountability for outcomes may be diffuse. Conversely, systems that have clearer coordination mechanisms and stronger linkages between education, training, employment and social services appear better equipped to provide integrated support. WP5 will therefore explore the hypothesis that institutional coherence is positively associated with both equity and efficiency in youth transitions, while recognising that coherence can be achieved through different governance models.

A second theme relates to the persistence of structural inequalities despite extensive policy activity. WPs 1, 2 and 3A all indicate that socio-economic background, migration status, disability and regional factors remain powerful predictors of educational and labour-market outcomes. Even where overall NEET rates decline or completion rates rise, disadvantaged groups often do not benefit proportionately. This raises questions about whether current policies primarily improve outcomes for those already relatively advantaged, or whether they effectively address the compounded barriers facing marginalised youth. WP5 will investigate the extent to which policy measures mitigate or reproduce inequalities, and under what conditions intersectional determinants are most strongly associated with unfavourable trajectories.

A third theme concerns the changing nature of skills and competencies. WP1's dataset review and WP3B's expert interviews both highlight the growing relevance of digital skills, AI literacy, transversal competencies and socio-emotional capacities. Yet these domains are only partially reflected in existing datasets and are unevenly embedded in policy frameworks. WP5 will treat this as both an empirical and conceptual challenge. Empirically, limited measurement may lead to underestimation of the role such skills play in transitions. Conceptually, there is a need to clarify whether these competencies should be understood primarily as individual attributes, as outcomes of institutional practices or as emergent properties of learning environments and labour markets.

A fourth theme is the temporal dimension of transitions. Emerging evidence suggests that early decisions, such as tracking at lower-secondary level or entry into specific vocational pathways, may have long-lasting consequences for labour-market prospects, and that shocks such as the COVID-19 pandemic can alter trajectories in non-linear ways. WP3B's distinction between short-, medium- and long-term trends provides an initial framework, but WP5 will need to translate this into operational models that can be applied across datasets and case studies. One working hypothesis is that systems with more flexible and permeable pathways are better able to absorb shocks and support recovery, whereas those with rigid tracks and narrow qualification routes may amplify early disadvantages.

A fifth theme is the role of young people's agency and voice. WP3B interviews underline that young people are not passive recipients of policy but active decision-makers who interpret opportunities and constraints through their own experiences, values and expectations. At the same time, their voices are only weakly represented in current policy design processes. WP5 will therefore place particular emphasis on integrating the forthcoming qualitative evidence from WP4 with the structural and policy analyses, in order to understand how institutional arrangements and policies are perceived, negotiated and sometimes resisted by young people themselves.

Finally, a cross-cutting theme concerns data infrastructure and knowledge gaps. WPs 1 and 3A clearly demonstrate that the existing European evidence base is insufficient to support fully comprehensive analyses of pathways and transitions. Entire dimensions, such as longitudinal tracking, digital skills or detailed information on institutional practices, are either poorly measured or absent in many datasets. WP5's synthesis will therefore be explicit about what can and cannot be inferred from available evidence, and will treat the identification of missing data as an important contribution in its own right. The edited volume will devote specific attention to these gaps, not only as methodological limitations but also as targets for future European data initiatives.

1.5. Roadmap for WP5

Planned analytical steps for Years Two and Three

The subsequent phases of WP5 will move from preliminary structuring work towards more intensive synthesis. This transition involves several interlinked steps. First, WP5 will develop an integrative analytical matrix that aligns key dimensions from each WP. On one axis, the matrix will include determinants such as socio-economic background, gender, migration status, disability, region, institutional resources and policy interventions. On the other axis, it will list key outcomes including completion, transition durations, NEET status, employment quality and subjective indicators of well-being and trust. Within the matrix, the project will map which datasets, policy analyses, expert assessments and qualitative findings speak to each cell. This will make visible both areas where evidence converges and cells that remain empty due to data gaps.

Second, WP5 will support the construction of comparative typologies based on combined evidence from WPs 2, 3A and 3B. These typologies will not simply mirror common classifications such as "Nordic", "Southern" or "Eastern" Europe, but will be derived from indicators of governance coherence, investment patterns, transition structures, equity outcomes and resilience to shocks. WP5 will then examine how young people's narratives in WP4 align with or challenge these system-level types.

Third, WP5 will coordinate thematic syntheses around a set of transversal topics that cut across chapters of the edited volume. Possible topics include the governance of youth transitions, digitalisation and AI, guidance

and counselling, mental health and well-being, the role of employers, regional disparities, and the specific situation of migrant and minority youth. For each theme, WP5 will assemble relevant findings from all WPs, identify consistencies and tensions, and work with WP teams to develop integrated contributions for the volume and for subsequent policy briefs.

Fourth, WP5 will prepare a staged sequence of policy outputs that build on, but go beyond, the Year One discussion notes. As more evidence becomes available, WP5 will collaborate with WPs 1–4 to translate findings into concise messages for different audiences. These may include thematic policy briefs, stakeholder toolkits, and synthesis notes tailored to particular sectors such as schools, VET providers, employment services, local authorities or youth organisations. The edited volume will provide the comprehensive analytical foundation, while these shorter products will act as targeted communication tools.

Finally, WP5 will develop an evaluative framework to assess the robustness and policy relevance of its own synthesis. This will include attention to triangulation across data sources, transparency about limitations, explicit differentiation between evidence-based findings and more speculative interpretations, and sensitivity to diversity across contexts. The ISAB's comments will be particularly important for refining this framework.

Anticipated challenges

Several challenges are already visible. One concerns the integration of heterogeneous evidence. Datasets differ in scope, timing and quality; policy reviews are necessarily selective; expert interviews reflect perceptions shaped by national contexts; and qualitative case studies will involve diverse local realities. WP5 must avoid the temptation either to over-aggregate, thereby suppressing important differences, or to present a collection of disconnected case descriptions. Achieving a balance between generalisation and contextual specificity will require deliberate methodological choices and clear communication of what can and cannot be inferred.

A second challenge lies in dealing with causal complexity. Many determinants of youth transitions interact in non-linear ways. For example, the effect of vocational specificity may depend on the structure of local labour markets; the impact of guidance services may be contingent on the availability of quality training opportunities; digital skills may matter differently in regions with contrasting levels of technological development. WP5 cannot resolve all causal questions but must develop strategies for discussing mechanisms in a way that is honest about uncertainty while still informative for policy debates.

A third challenge relates to timing. By the time final synthesis work is undertaken, some policy contexts and economic conditions may have changed. This is particularly relevant for areas affected by rapid technological change or by political decisions such as reforms of VET systems, social protection schemes or migration policies. WP5 must therefore consider how to present findings so that they remain relevant even if specific indicators or institutional details evolve. One way of addressing this is to focus on structural mechanisms and patterns rather than on specific programmes, while still offering concrete examples where appropriate.

A fourth challenge is the ethical integration of youth voices. WP4's qualitative work will generate rich accounts that should not be instrumentalised simply to illustrate pre-existing narratives derived from quantitative or policy analyses. WP5 must ensure that young people's perspectives are treated as a distinct source of knowledge, capable of challenging system-level interpretations rather than merely confirming them. This will require reflexive discussion of power relations in research and of the limits of adult-centred policy frameworks.

2. Annotated draft outline of the concluding summarizing book (edited volume) on methodology and main project results (D5.1A)

2.1. Brief Description

This edited volume synthesizes the emerging insights of the Horizon Europe project “European youth in education and in transition to the labour market” (EDU-LAB). The project examines how young people navigate educational pathways, from general education (GE) and professional and vocational education and training (PVET) into early labour market participation, across several European contexts. It considers how individual characteristics, social and institutional arrangements, and broader policy environments shape access, participation, progression, completion, and transition outcomes.

Drawing on the conceptual foundations and early empirical activities of the project’s work packages, the volume brings together multiple methodological perspectives, including theoretical modelling approaches, mapping and assessment of education and labour-market policies, analyses of available international datasets, expert and stakeholder consultation (Delphi process), and qualitative case studies with young people. While analytical work is ongoing, the volume presents a first integrated view of the themes, challenges, and opportunities that structure youth transitions in Europe.

The book explores key questions linked to intersectional determinants, institutional issues, transition regimes, and young people’s experiences within different systems. It identifies emerging patterns as well as data and knowledge gaps that will guide subsequent project phases. By situating the project’s early findings within wider European priorities, the volume provides a foundation for future synthesis and policy guidance.

Intended for researchers, educators, policymakers, and practitioners, the volume aims to support ongoing efforts to adapt education and training systems to the diverse needs of young people and to strengthen their transitions into the labour market. The contributions emphasize transparency and comparability, while acknowledging the limitations of available evidence. The ultimate aspiration is to inform debates on more inclusive and resilient pathways in education and work across Europe.

2.2. Tentative title for the edited volume

The tentative title for the Edited Volume is ***“Pathways and Transitions in Education and Work: Challenges and Opportunities for Youth in Europe”***.

Editors of the Edited Volume will probably be WP Leaders (not yet confirmed), while authors of the several chapters will be several members of each participating team.

2.3. Principal table of contents (outline)

Chapter 1.	Introduction: Sustainable Pathways and Transitions in Europe
Chapter 2.	Conceptual Foundations for Modelling Youth Pathways and Transitions
Chapter 3.	Integrative Modelling Approaches to Pathways and Transitions
Chapter 4.	Policies Shaping Youth Pathways in Europe
Chapter 5.	Assessing Policy Effectiveness and Efficiency
Chapter 6.	Patterns in Educational Participation and Transitions
Chapter 7.	Systems, Structures and Transition Regimes
Chapter 8.	Expert Perspectives on Transitions: Delphi Findings
Chapter 9.	Trends, Forecasts, and Consensus Outcomes
Chapter 10.	Hearing Young People: Qualitative Insights Across Europe
Chapter 11.	Youth-Led Proposals and Co-Created Solutions
Chapter 12.	Integrated Evidence and Comparative Insights
Chapter 13.	Policy Directions, Stakeholder Guidance and Future Pathways

2.4. Table of Contents in more detail (draft, December 2025)

Chapter 1: Introduction: Sustainable pathways and transitions in Europe

[authors: Volume Editors]

This chapter presents the context and objectives of the edited volume and connects it with the EU's educational aims and SDG4. It describes the EDU-LAB project's interest in education and training of young people and their transitions to employment, its connections to other Horizon projects, and the aims, audience, and structure of the book. It outlines the project's conceptual framework around pathways and transitions, introduces the mixed-methods design of EDU-LAB, and explains how the various work packages contribute to a shared analytical agenda. The chapter also situates EDU-LAB within the wider European policy context, and clarifies the anticipated contributions of the volume for researchers, policymakers, practitioners, and civil society.

- 1.1 Context, aims and motivation
- 1.2 EDU-LAB's conceptual framework: pathways, transitions, intersectionality
- 1.3 Overview of methodological approaches across WPs
- 1.4 European education priorities
- 1.5 Structural logic of the volume
- 1.6 Expected contributions and audiences

Chapter 2: Conceptual foundations for modelling youth pathways and transitions

[authors (mainly) from WP1]

This chapter presents the main conceptual foundations for analysing youth pathways and transitions in education and work. It describes the typologies of pathways into education and the labour market with reference to key determinants at an intersectional level (e.g., gender, socio-economic background, migration status, disability, and regional disparities) which influence how young people move through systems of general and vocational education and move into employment. It highlights the variety of transitions and explores the way institutional arrangements, governance structures, and broader socio-economic conditions affect these processes. It additionally highlights data and knowledge gaps exposed by the work of EDU-LAB and reflects on how these gaps constrain cross-national comparison. The chapter ends by outlining the implications of this conceptual framework for subsequent empirical analysis and comparative synthesis in the volume.

- 2.1 Typologies of educational and labour-market pathways
- 2.2 Intersectional determinants shaping transitions
- 2.3 Forms of transitions
- 2.4 Institutional and systemic factors influencing pathways
- 2.5 Data and knowledge gaps identified in EDU-LAB
- 2.6 Conceptual implications for comparative analysis

Chapter 3: Integrative modelling approaches to pathways and transitions

[authors (mainly) from WP1]

This chapter outlines the approaches to modelling youth pathways and transitions that guide analytical work within EDU-LAB. It discusses how structural, probabilistic and network-oriented perspectives can be used to represent the multiple determinants and outcomes of transitions, without committing to one single technique. The chapter examines how qualitative and quantitative evidence can be linked within integrative models, and how such models can be used to explore barriers, enablers, and decision points along educational and labour-market trajectories. It pays particular attention to the challenge of representing cross-national variation and methodological uncertainty in a way that remains analytically robust yet realistic about data limitations. The chapter concludes by explaining how these modelling approaches will support cross-WP integration.

- 3.1 Structural, probabilistic and network models
- 3.2 Linking qualitative and quantitative evidence
- 3.3 Modelling determinants and outcomes across systems
- 3.4 Modelling barriers and enablers to transitions
- 3.5 Translating models into comparative frameworks
- 3.6 Implications for cross-WP analytical integration

Chapter 4: Policies shaping youth pathways in Europe

[authors (mainly) from WP2]

This chapter describes the regional and national educational policy environments in which youth pathways and transitions are shaped throughout Europe. It presents governance structures, mechanisms, and financing patterns in general and vocational education systems, describing how responsibilities are distributed across tiers of government and between public and private actors. It examines central national and regional policy instruments and reforms affecting access, progression and completion in GE and PVET, as well as the alignment between education and labour-market policies. It highlights variety of institutional arrangements across EDU-LAB countries and identifies policy areas where fragmentation or weak coordination may disrupt successful transitions. The chapter grounds the empirical analyses in specific policy contexts and lays down the vital groundwork for understanding how systems work to determine opportunities, constraints, and inequalities in youth pathways.

- 4.1 Structures of governance and steering mechanisms
- 4.2 Financing models in GE and PVET
- 4.3 Key national and regional policy instruments
- 4.4 Alignment between education and labour-market policies
- 4.5 Policy reforms and implementation challenges
- 4.6 Cross-country diversity in institutional arrangements

Chapter 5: Assessing policy effectiveness and efficiency

[authors (mainly) from WP2]

This chapter introduces and discusses the EDU-LAB Policy Efficacy Assessment Matrix as a framework for evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of education and training policies. It explains the conceptual and methodological foundations of the matrix, clarifies the distinction between different dimensions of policy performance and sets out the indicators and information sources that can be mobilized for comparative assessment. The chapter presents initial insights into the ways policies and investments operate across different contexts, reflecting on costs, outcomes and distributional effects, while also emphasizing the limitations of available data. It highlights barriers to policy effectiveness and draws attention to the institutional and implementation challenges that frequently undermine reform efforts. The chapter concludes by discussing the lessons learned for designing future evaluation frameworks that are better able to support evidence-informed policymaking in youth transitions.

5.1 The EDU-LAB Policy Efficacy Assessment Matrix

5.2 Methodological foundations and indicators

5.3 Cost–effectiveness and investment logic

5.4 Policy outcome patterns across countries

5.5 Barriers to policy effectiveness

5.6 Lessons for future evaluation frameworks

Chapter 6: Patterns in educational participation and transitions

[authors (mainly) from WP3A]

This chapter presents macro-level patterns of educational participation, attainment, and transitions across Europe, based on available datasets. It elaborates on the process of dataset and indicator identification and selection, including criteria employed and the limitations imposed by differences in coverage, definitions and data quality. The chapter analyses emerging patterns in access, participation and completion in general education and vocational pathways and relates these to early labour-market outcomes (e.g., employment, unemployment and NEET status). It identifies major similarities and differences between countries and discusses how these patterns can be interpreted in view of the structural features of educational and labour-market systems. The chapter ends with a reflection on the methodological challenges of cross-national quantitative analysis and the implications of these challenges for the interpretation of results and the design of further empirical work.

6.1 Overview of available datasets and selection criteria

6.2 Participation, attainment and completion in GE

6.3 Participation, attainment and completion in PVET

6.4 Transition durations and pathways into employment

6.5 NEET patterns and labour-market segmentation

6.6 Methodological considerations for cross-national comparisons

Chapter 7: Systems, structures and transition regimes

[authors (mainly) from WP3A]

This chapter concentrates on national education and labour-market systems as the structural contexts in which youth transitions take place. It demonstrates how stratification and tracking shape educational opportunities and influence the distribution of risks and advantages among different groups of young people. Building on the quantitative evidence and established literature, the chapter describes typologies of youth transition regimes and compares structural elements across the EDU-LAB countries. It also investigates how systems respond to external shocks, such as economic crises or the COVID-19 pandemic, and what this reveals about institutional resilience and vulnerability. Special attention is paid to structural inequalities both within and between countries, and to the ways in which system design may mitigate or reinforce these inequalities. As such, this chapter ends with a discussion of what such systemic patterns mean for future policy design.

- 7.1 Stratification and tracking in education systems
- 7.2 Vocational specificity and labour-market linkages
- 7.3 Typologies of youth transition systems
- 7.4 Institutional resilience to crises and disruptions
- 7.5 Structural inequalities within and across countries
- 7.6 Implications for system-level policy design

Chapter 8: Expert perspectives on transitions: findings of the Delphi survey

[authors (mainly) from WP3B]

This chapter introduces the rationale, design and findings of the multi-stage Delphi process performed in EDU-LAB. It describes why the Delphi method is particularly well-suited for cross-national, multi-stakeholder research on youth transitions and gives an account of the phases of the process, from exploratory expert interviews to iterative survey rounds. The chapter discusses how experts from different sectors and levels of governance perceive the alignment between education and labour markets, and what they identify as key strengths and weaknesses in existing systems. It identifies both consensus and divergences in the areas concerned, such as the adequacy of guidance systems, the responsiveness of curricula, or the capacity of institutions to tackle inequalities. The chapter ends by noting how expert views can be added to evidence-based governance to serve as a complement to both quantitative and qualitative findings from other WPs.

- 8.1 The multi-stage Delphi process and rationale
- 8.2 Stakeholder views on education–labour alignment
- 8.3 Consensus areas regarding system strengths
- 8.4 Divergence areas and contested issues
- 8.5 Perceptions of future risks and readiness
- 8.6 Implications for evidence-based governance

Chapter 9: Trends, forecasts, and consensus outcomes

[authors (mainly) from WP3B]

This chapter uses the Delphi material to explore anticipated trends, risks and opportunities in youth education and labour-market transitions over short-, medium- and long-term horizons. It examines expert assessments of the consequences of post-COVID realignments, digitalisation and other near-term developments, and considers how these might affect pathways into and within education and work. It then turns to medium-term transformations concerning automation, artificial intelligence, and emerging skill requirements, before moving on to longer-term demographic and structural changes that may reshape transition regimes. The chapter identifies commonalities and differences in expert expectations among countries and regions, and also identifies areas of significant consensus and uncertainty. It also highlights priority areas for policy attention and system innovation arising from these forward-looking views, and indicates which problems need more in-depth empirical and even comparative scrutiny.

- 9.1 Short-term dynamics: digitalization, post-COVID shifts
- 9.2 Medium-term transformations: automation, AI, skills demands
- 9.3 Long-term trajectories: demographic and structural change
- 9.4 Inclusion and equity challenges
- 9.5 Opportunities for system innovation
- 9.6 Key uncertainties for policy and planning

Chapter 10: Hearing young people: qualitative insights across Europe

[authors (mainly) from WP4]

This chapter presents the overall research approach and main findings from the qualitative case studies that foreground young people's voices in EDU-LAB. It describes the participatory and youth-centred methodological framework, the selection of case-study sites across seven European countries and the diversity of educational and labour-market pathways represented by the participants. In this chapter the general and vocational education experiences, decision making and aspirations of young people, their aspirations and constraints, and also their engagement with guidance, institutional support and barriers are explored. It examines how intersectional factors—such as gender, socio-economic background, migration status, and disability—influence these experiences and how those experiences interact with institutional structures. It highlights the contribution of qualitative cross-national research that can expose patterns and mechanisms lost in quantitative data, as well as what this finding may mean in the field of transition processes and inequalities.

- 10.1 Participatory and youth-centred research approach
- 10.2 Case study design and site selection
- 10.3 Educational experiences in GE and PVET
- 10.4 Transitions to work: aspirations, constraints and coping
- 10.5 Intersectional experiences (e.g. gender, SES, migration, disability)
- 10.6 Added value of qualitative comparative research

Chapter 11: Youth-led proposals and co-created solutions

[authors (mainly) from WP4]

This chapter focuses on the ideas, proposals and solutions generated with and by young people in the course of the qualitative case studies. It synthesises youth-identified challenges in education, training and transitions, and offers co-created suggestions for improving teaching practices, learning environments, guidance systems and support structures. The chapter looks at how young people see more inclusive, flexible and meaningful pathways, including their views about the status and organisation of PVET, apprenticeships and work-based learning. It further brings attention to system-level ideas for innovation emerging from young people on the ground: school–employer partnerships; the role of local support networks; civil society. The chapter also remarks about the methodological and democratic importance of participatory methods in educational research and policy formation and how ideas by young people may inform the policy and practice design in various national environments.

- 11.1 Youth-identified challenges in pathways and transitions
- 11.2 Co-created ideas for improving educational practice
- 11.3 Proposals for strengthening guidance and support
- 11.4 Youth perspectives on PVET, apprenticeships and work-based learning
- 11.5 System-level innovation ideas emerging from youth dialogues
- 11.6 Reflections on participatory policymaking

Chapter 12: Integrated evidence and comparative insights

[authors (mainly) from WP5]

This chapter brings together evidence from all preceding work packages in order to develop an integrated understanding of youth pathways and transitions across Europe. It synthesises findings on determinants, structures and outcomes and analyses how individual-level characteristics interact with systemic features of education and labour-market regimes. The chapter contrasts transition patterns between general and vocational systems and considers differences in access, progression, completion, transition duration and early employment conditions and links that to governance arrangements, policy instruments and institutional practices. It presents comparative typologies and clusters of countries according to dimensions such as equity, efficiency and resilience and reflects on how different mixes of these dimensions impact youth opportunities and risks. The chapter ends with some reflection on the implications of these interconnected findings for the development of a comprehensive framework to understand and evaluate youth transitions across diverse European contexts.

- 12.1 Synthesis of findings across WPs
- 12.2 Relationships among structures, determinants and outcomes
- 12.3 Comparative analysis of GE and PVET transitions
- 12.4 Cross-country typologies and clusters
- 12.5 Dimensions of equity, efficiency and resilience
- 12.6 Implications for comprehensive transition frameworks

Chapter 13: Policy directions, stakeholder guidance and future pathways

[authors (mainly) from WP5]

The final chapter translates the integrated evidence of EDU-LAB into policy-relevant directions and guidance for key stakeholders, while also outlining future research guidelines. It presents high-level policy orientations for improving pathways and transitions in general and vocational education, focusing on governance, coordination, investment and the alignment of education and labour-market strategies. The chapter proposes tailored guidance for different stakeholder groups, including policymakers and public administrations, educational and training institutions, employers, civil society organisations and youth groups, drawing on the empirical findings and youth proposals presented in earlier chapters. It discusses how evidence can be linked to implementation through appropriate monitoring and evaluation arrangements and suggests indicators for future transition monitoring at national and European levels. The chapter concludes by sketching a forward-looking research agenda that emphasises longitudinal perspectives, digital and economic transformations and social-justice oriented reforms in education and labour policy, thereby connecting the project's findings to broader debates about the future of youth transitions in Europe.

- 13.1 High-level policy directions for GE and PVET
- 13.2 Governance and coordination principles
- 13.3 Stakeholder-specific guidance (policy, institutions, civil society, employers)
- 13.4 From evidence to implementation: monitoring and evaluation
- 13.5 Indicators for future transition monitoring
- 13.6 Future research agenda and concluding reflections

3. EDU-LAB Findings (draft): First annual set of dissemination and communication materials that illustrate and support major project outcomes (D5.1B)

3.1. Introduction

About EDU-LAB Findings series

This section of the deliverable D5.1B contains elaborated drafts of a series of dissemination and communication materials that accompany the core deliverables produced by the end of 2025 in WP1, WP2 and WP3B, as well as inform about the achieved progress in WP3A and WP4.

These drafted pieces will be further edited and widely disseminated among the target groups of project stakeholders via a variety of EDU-LAB communication channels, such as project's website, social networks, conference presentations and individual contacts of members of the whole research consortium. This stage of intensive dissemination and communication campaign will start in January 2026.

For the time being (by the end of the first implementation year 2025), several pieces have been compiled that shall constitute a series of **EDU-LAB Findings**. These Findings will be designed in various forms, such as Discussion Notes, Policy Briefs, research updates, etc. Later on, once the project's research program yields further substantial outputs (during 2026 and 2027), these will be also produced in shorter or longer and more substantial formats, including Policy and Practice Recommendations, Toolkits, etc. that will be suitable for the further systematic dissemination among the wider audiences, as well as direct targeted communications with all groups of project's stakeholders.

EDU-LAB Findings produced in Year One (by December 2025)

By the end of the first implementation year, there have been produced the following dissemination and communication materials that illustrate and support major project outcomes:

- Data and information gaps regarding educational pathways and transitions (a Discussion Note from WP1 for Year One, draft)
- Policies, Programmes and Investments for Youth Transitions (a Discussion Note from WP2 for Year One, draft)
- Data Gaps and Cross-National Comparability in Youth Transitions (a Discussion Note from WP3A for Year One, draft)
- Expert Perspectives and System Challenges from OSES-Delphi Preparatory Work (Discussion Note: preliminary summary of and findings from Expert Interviews) (WP3B)
- Laying the Groundwork for Hearing Young People's Voices (interim update from Case Studies fieldwork in WP4 from Year One)

Advanced drafts of all these five pieces are included in this report and the editorial work will continue till mid-January 2026 prior the official start of the next communication campaign.

3.2. Data and information gaps regarding educational pathways and transitions (a discussion note from WP1 for Year One, draft)

Author: Prof. Theodor Leiber, EVALAG

Assume you want to model pathways, or general routes, and transitions, or striking changes on the route, in education and training (E&T) and to the world of labour. Such modelling should be evidence-informed, i.e., among other things, you need empirical data to induce, check and corroborate your structural models. One important data source for this is existing and accessible datasets like PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment), EUROSTUDENT, VET-in-Europe or NEPS (National Educational Panel Study, Germany) to mention but a few.

In this situation you might think it helpful to have an overview of the capabilities and performance options of relevant available datasets you are planning to use for secondary data analysis to answer some research questions about pathways and transitions in E&T and to the world of labour. Such an overview was produced in the context of the Horizon project “European Youth in Education and in Transition to the Labour Market” (EDU-LAB) in its work package on theoretical modelling of the mentioned pathways and transitions.

More specifically, if you are planning secondary data analysis you might be wishing to know which datasets can tell you something relevant about which determining factor (determinant) and transition that may occur in pathways through E&T and the world of labour. Along this line of thought, 20 identified available datasets were tested to what extent they cover 87 proposed intersectional determinants and 32 identified transitions.

The 20 datasets investigated were selected according to their pan-European or multi-country focus to ensure alignment with EDU-LAB’s broad geographical scope. Here are a few examples of datasets: ESJS (European Skills and Jobs Survey); EU-LFS (EU Labour Force Survey); EUROSTUDENT; PISA; TALIS (Teaching and Learning International Survey); VET in Europe; YAE (Youth and Adolescent Education Data).

The intersectional determinants just mentioned are the factors influencing pathways and transitions in E&T and labour. Here are a few examples: among the determinants of Access to E&T programmes and pathways are “Availability of the desired GE or PVET programme in the region of proximity” and “Availability of the desired GE or PVET programme in the overall country”; among the determinants of Progression and Completion of E&T programmes and pathways are “Fostering diversity, equity and inclusion”, “Support for NEET (Not in education, employment, or training) applicants for transition to and inclusion in E&T programmes or the labour market” and “Support for applicants with low socioeconomic status”.

The identified transitions within pathways and to and from the world of labour describe the larger steps in E&T and work. Again, a few examples illustrate the nature of transitions in the present context: transition from Upper Secondary General Education (USGE) to General Education Bachelor (GEBA); transition from GEBA to General Education Master (GEMA); transition from GEMA to Doctoral Programme/ Doctorate (DOCP); transition to another country; transition to the labour market (e.g., to permanent/ temporary full-time employment, to permanent/ temporary part-time employment, to unemployment); transition to inactivity with respect to employment and E&T (e.g., definitive drop-out, NEET).

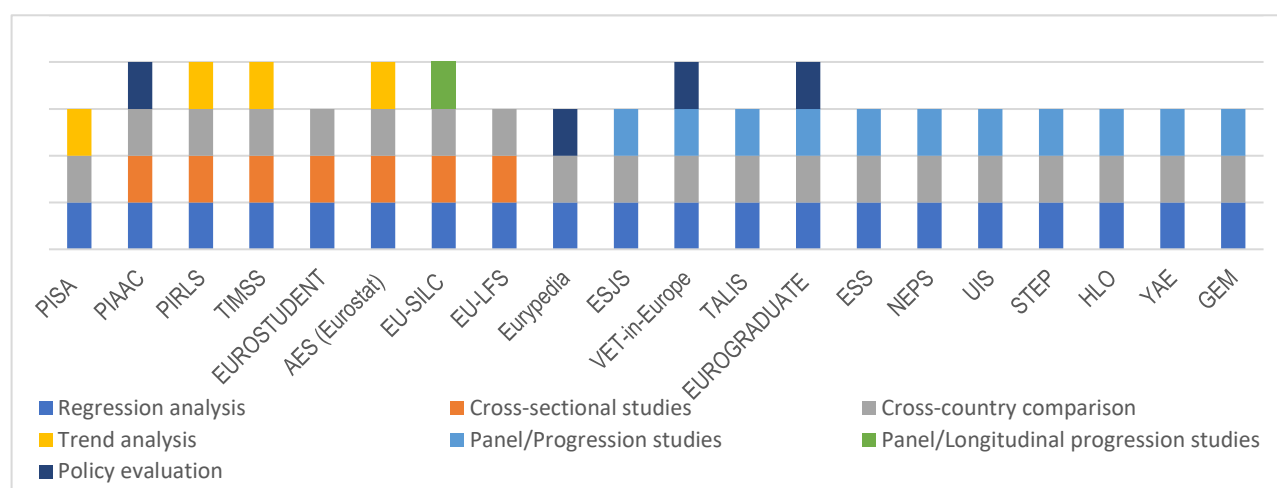
Now, if you want to hear from the analyses of the coverage of intersectional determinants and transitions by datasets, here are some core results and possible recommendations that might be of interest for education policy action:

For the datasets investigated, there are no serious deficiencies detectable regarding the methodological reliability of the datasets (assessed along the criteria of rigorous sampling, high-quality psychometric scaling, inclusion of background questionnaires for contextual data, quality monitoring). Datasets are methodologically fine.

The datasets have restricted profiles with respect to 7 types of secondary analysis, i.e., regression analysis; cross-sectional studies; cross-country comparison; trend analysis; panel/ progression studies; panel/ longitudinal progression studies; policy evaluation (see Figure 1). More specifically, this means that none of the datasets investigated offers all 7 types of secondary analysis as usability options. For example, all 20

datasets offer regression analysis and cross-country comparison, 11 datasets offer progression studies, 7 datasets offer cross-sectional studies, 4 datasets offer trend analysis, 4 datasets offer policy evaluation, and no dataset offers longitudinal progression studies as methodological options. From this follows that for each dataset it can be recommended to extend it by 3 or 4 types of secondary analysis – if, and this is an important condition which must be checked, the full range of 7 types of secondary analysis is required and appropriate. ***It is perhaps remarkable that longitudinal progression studies are a lacking methodological operation.***

Figure 1. Profiles of 20 datasets with respect to types of secondary analysis they offer: each bar for a certain dataset shows which types of secondary analysis are possible with the dataset



As 65% of datasets investigated are not downloadable and 65% do not offer access to microdata for research, it can be recommended that the accessibility of certain datasets should be improved.

Several “dataset gaps” are identified for determining factors of access to E&T programmes, i.e., some datasets investigated do not sufficiently cover various Access determinants (see Figure 2). Therefore, recommendations can be given for supplementing certain datasets to fill these “dataset gaps”. Here are a few selected examples: 12 out of 20 datasets could be supplemented to also cover the Access determinant “Language literacy tests”; 13 out of 20 datasets could be supplemented to also cover the Access determinant “MINT literacy tests”; 19 out of 20 datasets, among them PISA, EUROSTUDENT, VET-in-Europe, NEPS and others, could be supplemented to also cover Access determinant “Digitalisation and AI literacy tests”. ***Interestingly, this shows that these three Access determinants, in particular “Digitalisation and AI literacy” are not so well represented in the datasets investigated.***

3.3. Policies, Programmes and Investments for Youth Transitions (a discussion note from WP2 for Year One, draft)

Author: Prof, James Williams, Birmingham City University

Introduction and Purpose

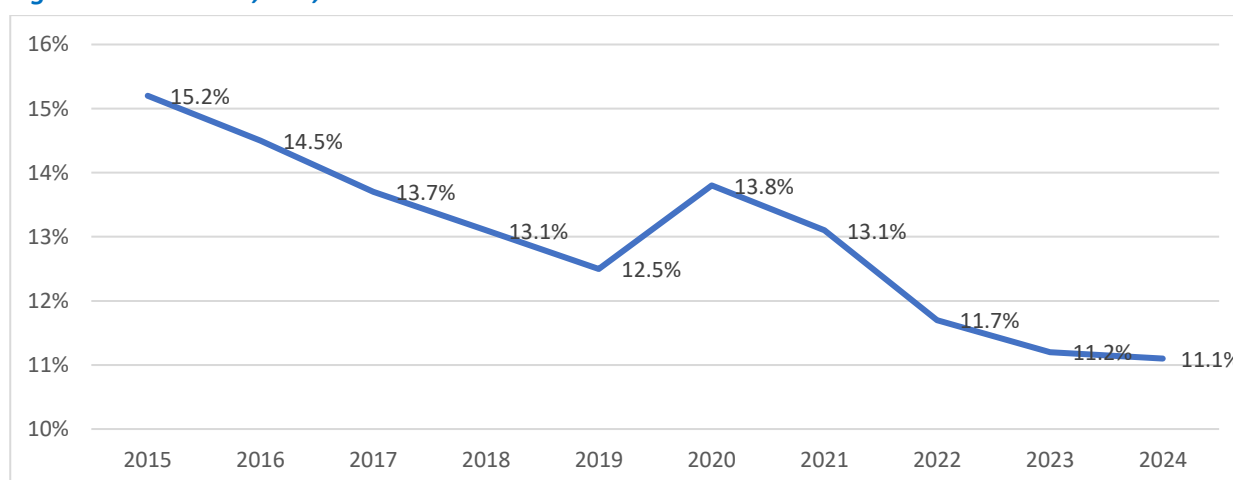
This discussion note is drawn from the findings of Deliverable 2.1 of the EDU-LAB project. The Deliverable reviews policies, programmes and investments designed to support youth transitions from education to training and into the labour force. The findings matter because youth transitions underpin social inclusion, equity and economic growth.

Key Insights

Four main findings were reported in Deliverable 2.1:

1. The most effective policies are those that emphasise integrated support structures and strong vocational pathways.
2. Efficiency depends on early investment, cost-benefit alignment and coordination between government departments and ground-level organisations and institutions.
3. Funding tends to come from major supra-national sources such as ESF+ and Erasmus+ but gaps remain in guidance and outreach.
4. Rates of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) across the EU declined from 15.2% in 2015 to 11.1% in 2024. However, regional disparities persist.

Figure 1: NEET rates, EEA, 2015-24



Critical Reflections

Strengths, weaknesses and gaps were identified in Deliverable 2.1:

- The main strengths of current policy and programmes in improving youth transitions are comprehensive frameworks like the (reinforced) Youth Guarantee and dual VET systems.
- The main weaknesses of current policy and programmes appear to be persistent structural barriers, fragmented governance, and output-focused evaluation.
- The principal gaps currently appear to be underinvestment in guidance, a weak youth voice and a misalignment between EU ambitions and local implementation.

These issues raise questions about sustainability and inclusiveness of current strategies.

Unintended effects

Deliverable 2.1 highlighted several unintended effects of current policy that have been identified in existing evaluations. As can be seen in Table 1 below, most of these are the result not of weaknesses in purpose but of deeper structural issues that are not addressed by the policies and programmes. Hence, the most disadvantaged are least likely to have the resources to apply for and access funding from schemes ('stratification') and the most difficult to reach individuals are those who are not in the system ('focus on registered NEETs'). Policies and programmes tend to lead to 'projectification' which can lead to short-term outcomes ('short-term activation') and the focus on employability of individual young people can distract from labour market issues. Schemes such as Erasmus+ can, in some cases, delay individuals in making transitions as they spend time studying and living in other countries. Finally, supra-national directives are implemented at national and local level, so are inevitably influenced by local structures and traditions of governance.

Table 1: Unintended Effects

<i>Unintended Effect</i>	<i>Description</i>
Stratification	Better-resourced youth benefit most from mobility schemes
Focus on registered NEETs	Hard-to-reach youth underserved
Short-term activation	Precarious jobs, weak progression
Overemphasis on employability	Structural labour market issues under-addressed
Mobility delays	Erasmus+ can prolong transitions
Fragmented governance	Overlapping schemes, weak coordination

Implications for Policy and Practice

This indicates, therefore, that future strategies should shift from short-term activation to long-term quality outcomes; enhance coordination between EU, national, and local actors; and address structural labour market issues alongside skills development.

However, it also indicates that data systems should be improved for longitudinal tracking. Most importantly, it indicates that one voice has been consistently absent in the design and development of policy and programmes: that of the youth themselves.

Questions for Stakeholders

This, of course, leads to five main questions for stakeholders:

1. *How can funding be aligned with long-term outcomes rather than short-term outputs?*
2. *How can policies better integrate structural labour market reforms with skills development?*
3. *What role should employers play in improving transition quality?*
4. *What mechanisms can ensure meaningful youth participation in policy design?*
5. *How can data systems be improved to track progression and job quality over time?*

3.4. Data Gaps and Cross-National Comparability in Youth Transitions (a discussion note from WP3A for Year One, draft)

Authors: Prof. Miriam Gebauer and Dr. Awais Malik, Bamberg University

Work Package 3A (WP3A) is one of the two core components of the EDU-LAB project's empirical work on youth transitions in education and employment. The primary focus of WP3A is to conduct secondary analyses of currently available datasets. Through statistical analyses of open-access and scientific data files, WP3A will investigate pathways within General Education (GE), Professional and Vocational Education and Training (PVET), as well as the transitions to and from the labor market. Socio-cultural, individual, and cognitive factors will be considered, including the influence of policy measures and public or private investments. The cross-country analyses will concentrate on the European Education Area (EEA), with a specific emphasis on the case study countries addressed in WP4.

Thus far, we have identified 49 national and international datasets that provide information on the transition of young people from school to work. One of the main outcomes from our initial overview of the available data is the identification of significant data gaps. Upon reviewing the datasets to assess general and non-general pathways for young people, it appears that there is a lack of high-quality pan-European data for valid comparisons regarding access, participation, and completion of pathways as well as transitions from school to work. While national data is available for many countries, allowing for within-country analysis of the transition from school to work, methodological differences such as varying sampling frames, age ranges, definitions of NEET and measurement tools limit the comparability of these data sets across countries. Consequently, future analyses may reveal systematic deficiencies in our understanding of determinants across different countries.

This lack of information is likely to be significant for stakeholders and policymakers. Therefore, we recommend highlighting this issue and advocating for the creation of pan-European datasets to help analysing, monitoring and evaluating pathways from school to work, which would enable valid comparisons across Europe. Two potential strategies could be pursued: calling for "methodological agreements" for merging existing national datasets or creating an entirely new international dataset.

Key stakeholders to engage include OECD Educational Research, CEDEFOP, national ministries of education (for educational data), EEA/EU data analysis organizations, and their respective partners.

3.5. Expert Perspectives and System Challenges from OSES-Delphi Preparatory Work (Discussion Note: preliminary summary of and findings from Expert Interviews) (WP3B)

Authors: Dr. Claudia Palt, Mr. Danjel Helmenstein, Dr. Alexander Chvorostov, ECONOMICA research institute

Executive summary

Purpose of this Discussion Note

WP3B conducted 47 expert interviews across nine EDU-LAB countries to prepare the ground for the OSES-Delphi survey. Year 1 aimed to:

- identify system-level challenges in education and youth transitions,
- gather cross-sector expert viewpoints,
- build the empirical basis for Round 1 Delphi statements.

Early Insights & Emerging Themes

- Education systems under simultaneous pressure and transformation
Digitalisation, demographic shifts, hybrid learning, and persistent inequalities frame the landscape within which transitions occur.
- Disconnection between education and labour markets
Experts consistently highlight the mismatch between what schools provide and what employers seek; transversal skills and practical experience emerge as critical gaps.
- Inequality as a systemic barrier
Family background, migration status, disability and place of residence remain strong determinants of youth outcomes; inclusion mechanisms are uneven and sometimes absent.
- Fragmented governance reduces system coherence
Weak coordination between ministries, schools, employers and civil society undermines effective transition support.
- Psychological and cultural dimensions matter
Experts emphasise young people's sense of uncertainty, alienation, and declining trust in institutions — factors often invisible in quantitative datasets.

Preliminary Implications (non-policy)

Delphi statements for Round 1 must reflect the tension between structural constraints and emerging opportunities (digitalisation, lifelong learning).

Cross-WP alignment is needed on definitions (e.g., "skills mismatch", "resilience", "equity").

The interviews surface blind spots for other WPs, particularly the importance of mental health (WP4) and governance coherence (WP2).

Next Steps (Year 2 Outlook)

- ⇒ Translation of interview insights into Delphi statements.
- ⇒ Implementation of Delphi Round 1 and Round 2.
- ⇒ Comparative analysis of convergence/divergence across countries and stakeholder clusters.
- ⇒ Integration of results with WP5 to inform synthesis.

OSes Delphi Expert Interview Summary

Between July and October 2025, national research teams within the EDU-LAB consortium conducted 47 face-to-face expert interviews across the nine project countries (Austria, Finland, Germany, Greece, Italy, Kosovo, Poland, Portugal, and the UK), with additional interviews involving international experts from other countries. Interview duration varied, ranging from 30 to 110 minutes, reflecting the depth and complexity of discussions. Each national team identified and interviewed experts and stakeholders with specialized knowledge in education systems, labour markets, business sectors, and youth transition policies. Interviews were conducted in participants' native languages or in English to ensure authentic and nuanced responses. All interviews underwent a standardized translation and summarization process. Economica (Austria) centrally transcribed and translated the interviews, producing comprehensive English summaries alongside full English transcripts using locally run artificial intelligence. These expert interviews establish the thematic foundation for the OSes-Delphi online survey, providing empirically grounded insights from key stakeholders across multiple European contexts.

1. Education Systems in Transition: Navigating Digitalisation and Social Inequality

The interviews highlight ongoing transformations in European education. Digital technologies, demographic shifts, and entrenched inequalities are all steering schools in new directions. Across countries, experts identify a major disconnect: what students are taught does not align with the needs of employers (Mismatch of Education and Labour market requirements). Curricula often remain theoretical, lacking enough emphasis on practical, hands-on skills especially in Central and Southern Europe.

At the same time, technology is advancing rapidly. Digital, creative, and social literacies have become essential. Artificial Intelligence and automation generate both chance and concern. While they create new opportunities, they also threaten to leave behind those without digital skills or access. As one Austrian expert observed: *"AI will transform the way we learn and work, but without inclusion, it will only reproduce privilege."*

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated these trends. Hybrid and online learning quickly became widespread, revealing shortcomings in both technology and teaching methods. Many experts expressed concern about students' mental health and motivation, noting that isolation and stress have become more pronounced.

2. From Education to Employment: Structural Obstacles and Skills Mismatches

In every country, the move from education to employment emerges as a vulnerable and complex transition for young people. Experts describe a landscape of bureaucratic hurdles, inconsistent career guidance, and weak connections between schools, employers, and public agencies. The issue of skills mismatch is repeatedly raised: students complete their studies, but their qualifications do not correspond to labour market demands.

Dual education systems with integrated work experience receive praise, especially from Northern European countries. Internships, apprenticeships, and mentorships serve as important bridges. As one Italian interviewee put it: *"We must bring the world of work into the school and the world of school into the workplace."*

Transversal skills (soft skills) such as communication, teamwork, adaptability, and problem-solving are viewed as increasingly important alongside technical expertise. Lifelong learning and adult education are not optional; they are necessary to remain employable in an environment where technology is continually changing expectations.

3. Social Inequality, Inclusion, and Discrimination

The interviews make it clear: deep-seated inequalities determine access to education and employment. Factors such as family income, place of residence, gender, disability, and migration status all influence future opportunities. Young people from rural or low-income backgrounds encounter fewer pathways to quality education and stable careers.

Experts describe how these disparities are worsened by discrimination and stereotypes within both education and the workforce. Migrants and ethnic minorities face systemic obstacles, while students with disabilities encounter inaccessible facilities and inadequate programs.

Policy recommendations emphasize targeted support: strengthening local community and school-based centers, early intervention, and genuine collaboration among ministries, NGOs, and local authorities. As a Polish expert noted, *“Inclusion is not charity, it is the condition for innovation.”*

4. Governance, Policy and Institutional Cooperation

Many respondents highlighted a significant challenge: governance in education and the labour market is fragmented, and national strategies often shift with political changes. There is a strong desire for more stability and genuine policy coherence. Again and again, experts emphasize one key issue which is better coordination. Ministries, regional authorities, social partners, civil society, and employers all need a meaningful place in decision-making processes.

European cooperation is crucial as well, especially for recognizing qualifications, harmonizing vocational training, and supporting mobility for workers across borders. Experts also repeatedly stress the need to acknowledge informal learning and develop ways to validate skills internationally.

5. Cultural and Psychological Dimensions: Motivation, Values, and Agency

While policy and structures are important, the experts also explored the cultural and psychological aspects of youth education and employment. There is a prevailing mood among young people: uncertainty, and even a sense of alienation. One respondent described it as a *“feeling of shrinking worlds.”* This is not just a perception; it is connected to precarious employment and declining trust in institutions.

Experts believe education must do more than deliver skills. Education should also foster motivation, resilience, and social capital. Schools should be environments where students feel a sense of belonging, and where creativity and meaningful dialogue are encouraged. As one Finnish educator put it: *“Education must not only prepare for work but for a meaningful life.”*

Conclusion

The expert interviews conducted by the OSES Delphi partner countries show that education systems are under real pressure, but at the same time, there are real opportunities for reform. The main priorities are clear: bridging the gap between education and employment, investing in lifelong learning, ensuring digital opportunities are available to all, and improving institutional cooperation. The findings make it evident: the future of education in Europe will rely on bringing together technological innovation, social inclusion, and democracy.

In sum, the expert interviews provide a coherent empirical foundation for the Delphi process, a process that will translate expert insights into statements to be able to reach a collective foresight on the future of education and labour in Europe.

3.6. Laying the Groundwork for Hearing Young People's Voices (interim update from Case Studies fieldwork in WP4 from Year One)

Author: Prof. Filomena Parada. Lusofona University

Year 1 of WP4 concentrated on conceptual and methodological preparation rather than empirical data collection. Although no substantive findings are available yet, this preparatory work is essential for ensuring that subsequent qualitative evidence is robust, comparable across countries and ethically sound. The WP4 design is closely aligned with the information needs of WP1–WP3 and with the synthesis aims of WP5, so that young people's voices can be systematically integrated with quantitative, policy and expert evidence in later phases.

Fieldwork with young people will take place from Year 2 onwards. Only then will it be possible to derive concrete policy and practice implications based on their experiences, perceptions and proposals. The current discussion note therefore does not present recommendations but explains how WP4 is preparing the ground for youth-informed guidance on access, participation, progression and transitions that will feed into later policy briefs and the edited volume.

Annexes

Information leaflet about OSES-Delphi survey (WP3A) (advanced draft)

Forthcoming online in January 2025

EDU-LAB Newsletter Issue One (June 2025)

URL <https://www.edu-lab-project.eu/1489/>

EDU-LAB Newsletter Issue Two (December 2025, advanced draft)

Forthcoming online in January 2025

OSSES-Delphi (Online Survey of Experts and Stakeholders):

Expert voices for youth transitions from education and training into labour

What is OSSES?

OSSES-Delphi (Online Survey of Experts and Stakeholders) is EDU-LAB's two-round stakeholder and expert consultation. It gathers assessments of current practices and future trends in education-to-work transitions, guidance, inclusion, governance, and related policies across Europe and beyond. By engaging researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders, OSSES-Delphi provides evidence-based recommendations for inclusive, future-ready education and employment systems for young people. It will inform in-depth analysis and EU policy recommendations published in 2026–2027, with interested participants receiving a results summary.

Main target groups of OSSES-Delphi respondents

- Governance: Ministries, labour market agencies, accreditation bodies
- Business actors and agencies: Employer federations, chambers, trade unions
- Education staff: Teachers, trainers, administrators, guidance officers
- Civil society & youth: NGOs, youth councils, media
- Research & academia: Universities, think tanks, consultants
- International: EC, Cedefop, OECD, UNESCO

How it works

- Systematic literature reviews and Exploratory Expert Interviews inform the main survey themes and discussion statements (May–October 2025)
- Two rounds of Delphi-type assessment:
 - Assessment of thematic statements (January–February 2026)
 - Reassessment of initial results and consensus-building (March–April 2026)
- Analysis and discussion of outcomes in a series of open workshops with stakeholders (July 2026–December 2027)



About EDU-LAB

EDU-LAB (European Youth in Transitions to Education and Labour) is a three-year Horizon Europe project (2025–2027). It examines transitions in education and training and to employment of young people aged 15–30 across Europe. The consortium brings together 11 partners from 9 countries, including the UK and Kosovo. EDU-LAB's fieldwork combines two complementary approaches. The OSSES-Delphi component surveys experts and stakeholders, while young people from seven countries take part in focus groups and participatory workshops. Together, these methods ensure the project captures both the direct experiences of young Europeans and the insights of professionals working in education, employment, and policy.

Data protection & Ethics

- Collected empirical data and associated methods comply with the GDPR and have received approval from the EDU-LAB Ethics Committee.
- EEs and surveys are pseudonymized and stored on encrypted servers in Austria.
- Personal identifiers will be deleted after project completion (Dec 2027)
- Participation is voluntary.

Follow the EDU-LAB project on our website and social media to stay up to date with the latest research, results, and events:



edu-lab-project.eu



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edulabproject.bsky.social

Contact us

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EDULAB



Funded by
the European Union

A Horizon Europe
collaborative project
Grant Agreement # 101177428
Project Duration: 2025–2027

Youth in education and labour transitions:
Knowing what you do and doing what you know

EDULAB
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Newsletter

1



European Youth in Transition to
Education and **Labour**



EDU-LAB Newsletter I



Funded by
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A Horizon Europe collaborative project (2025-2027)
Grant Agreement # 101177428
Project Duration: 2025-2027

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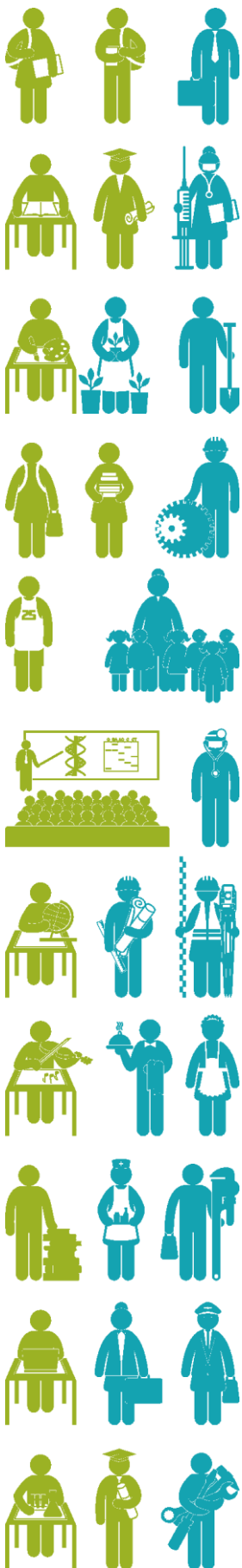
July 2025 | Newsletter # 1

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The EDU-LAB newsletter provides regular updates on the progress and findings of the EDU-LAB research project, which investigates how young people in Europe manage the transition from education and training to employment. With research updates, partner profiles, news on stakeholder engagement, and key project highlights, the newsletter offers valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, education professionals and anyone involved in youth transitions.

EDU-LAB is funded by the European Union's program "Horizon Europe" under the Grant Agreement # 101177428

The newsletter is published twice a year and provides half-yearly insights into the work and developments of the project.



A Note from the Coordinator



Dear readers,

Welcome to the very first issue of the EDU-LAB Newsletter, the biannual publication of our Horizon Europe project focused on improving how young people move from education and training into employment across Europe.

EDU-LAB brings together a consortium of partners from research, policy, and practice to better understand what shapes young people's choices, opportunities, and outcomes. Our mission is grounded in collaboration and evidence: we aim to generate actionable knowledge that can help shape more inclusive, equitable, and effective transitions for all young people—whether they follow academic, vocational, or alternative educational paths.

We are excited to begin this journey and to share it with you. Whether you're a policy maker, educator, researcher, or simply interested in the future of European youth, we hope you'll find this newsletter both, useful and engaging. We look forward to your continued interest and involvement and invite you to subscribe to this Newsletter on our website. Feel free to contact the Coordination team and project partners for any research-related inquiries, cooperation opportunities and various project-related consultations.

Warm regards,

*Dr. Alexander Chvorostov (Project Coordinator)
and the whole EDU-LAB Project Consortium*



Project Launch & Current Status

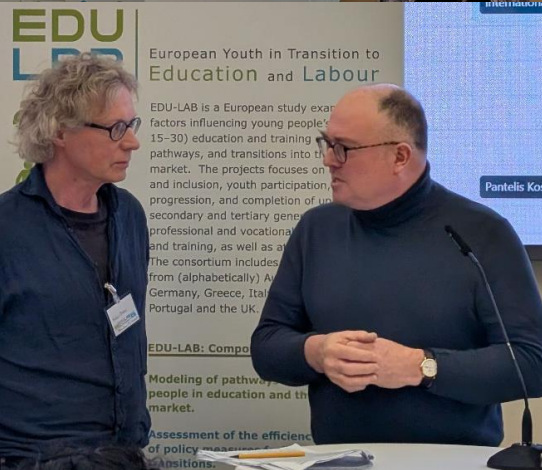
Project launch events in Vienna and Kosovo

The EDU-LAB project was launched on 01 January 2025 and, after the initial preparatory phase, we organised a two-day kick-off conference on 6–7 February 2025 in Vienna, at the premises of the Federation of Austrian Industries. Representatives from all eleven partner institutions came together to discuss the details of the work program prepared in advance and to better get to know each other better; the meeting was organised in hybrid mode allowing the active participation of those few researchers who could not attend the conference in person. This marked the start of a joint commitment to research towards improving the transition of young people from education and training to employment across Europe.

To complement the central kick-off, AAB College in Kosovo hosted two foundational events that further strengthened project coordination and capacity building. On 10 March, AAB organised an annual planning workshop in which tasks were distributed, interfaces between work packages were created and resource plans were coordinated. Shortly afterwards, on 25 March, a high-level official project launch took place, which also saw the opening of the “EDU-LAB Research Centre” – a dedicated centre for research, training and stakeholder cooperation. These events anchored EDU-LAB in the Western Balkans and under-



EDU-LAB presented at EU Information Session at Culture and Inclusive Society Programmes in Kosovo



EDU-LAB Kick-off conference in Vienna

lined AAB's strong commitment to the project mission.

Start of the EDU-LAB information and communication campaigns

By the time of the kick-off, we had launched the project's website and established several further communication channels in social networks. All partners have published the project-related news and updates on their institutional websites and networks. Besides, we have established reliable communication and exchange channels with other EU-funded projects in the same cluster (BRIDGE, NEXT-UP, VETPREP and others).



Project inauguration of the "EDU-LAB Research Centre" at Pristina



Methodological milestone at EDU-LAB workshop in Porto

With the transition from the design to the implementation phase, the focus was on refining the research tools and fieldwork procedures. An important milestone for that was the workshop in Porto on 8–9 May 2025 at Universidade Lusófona. There, the partners finalised methodological tools and guidelines for the upcoming 12 qualitative case studies in 7 countries, as well as and the cross-national online survey of experts and stakeholders (OSSES-Delphi). The sessions covered interview guides, the design of participatory workshops, on-boarding processes and technical preparations for large-scale expert surveys. At the same time, the workshop marked the start of the qualitative phase: several teams had already begun on-boarding and data collection.

Progressing into the Action Phase

In parallel, the consortium worked to map education and labour market policies, conduct literature reviews and identify research gaps.

This groundwork formed the analytical basis for EDU-LAB's dual research strategy: a combination of comparative policy analysis, youth-centred qualitative fieldwork and expert stakeholder engagement.

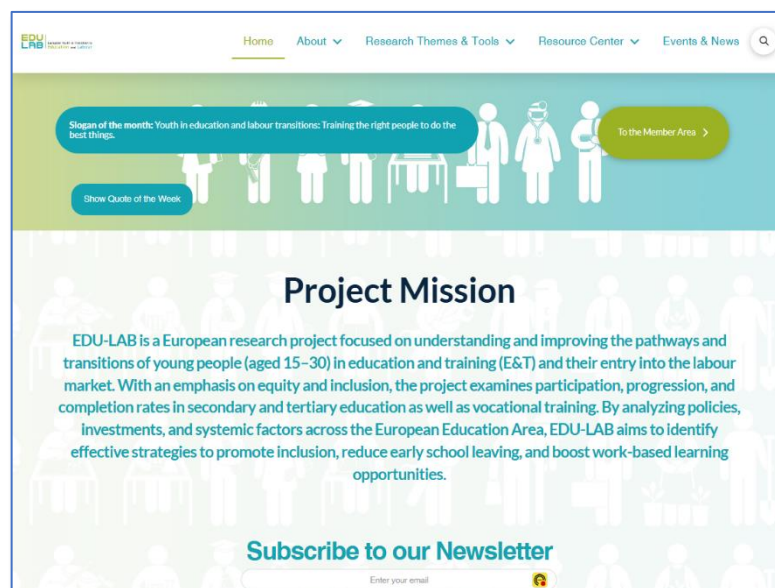
The digital presence was also established: the project website and social media channels went online to support visibility and dissemination at a later time.

Workshop in Porto

With these structures and collaborations in place, the project has moved from planning and preparatory stage to implementation – the empirical data collection phase has begun: case studies, exploratory interviews and survey designs are underway. In the coming months, the focus will be on capturing real-life experiences, uncovering gaps and developing actionable insights to promote more inclusive and effective transitions from education to the world of work for young people across Europe. Please read the article on pages 10-11 for further details on the project's fieldwork.

As part of this transition, the first set of project deliverables—due at the end of June—

have been successfully submitted, marking a key reporting milestone in the project timeline.



Project's website



Project's social networks



Main Objectives & Research Questions

Mapping Youth Transitions



Identifying how young people move from education or training into employment across different countries, systems, and life situations.

Evaluating Policies and Programmes

Reviewing public policies and institutional initiatives that aim to support smoother, more equitable education-to-work transitions.



Understanding Inequalities



Exploring how social background, gender, geography, and other factors shape opportunities and outcomes for young people during these transitions.

Including Youth Perspectives

Engaging directly with young people to understand their lived experiences, expectations, and the challenges they face in making educational and career choices.



Exploring Education & Employment Pathways



Investigating the different routes young people follow—academic, vocational, or mixed—and how these influence their long-term prospects.

Building a Shared Research Framework

Developing common tools, concepts, and methods across the consortium to ensure high-quality, comparable research across countries and work packages.



Supporting Evidence-Based Policy



Generating insights that help policymakers design interventions that are grounded in data, research, and the real experiences of young people.

Developing Comparative Insights

Drawing lessons from cross-national comparisons to identify what works, where, and for whom—recognizing both diversity and shared challenges across Europe.



What EDU-LAB aims to understand and achieve

EDU-LAB is a Horizon Europe project that investigates how young people across Europe manage the transitions in and from education and training to employment – and how these paths can be made fairer, more informed and more just, informed and resilient. In the face of rapid social, economic and technological change, these transitions have become increasingly complex. EDU-LAB therefore asks what factors determine young people's decisions, how institutional systems and policies influence their opportunities, and what interventions are appropriate to improve outcomes.

Understanding and Improving Youth Transitions in education, training and employment in Europe.

At its core, the project aims to identify and explain the patterns and inequalities that exist in youth transitions in education, training and employment across different European countries and regions. It examines how aspects such as gender, socioeconomic background and type of education or training pathway shape young people's experiences and future prospects. At the same time, EDU-LAB takes a close look



at the surrounding structures – such as school systems, labour markets, counselling services and public programmes – to understand how these systems either support or hinder transitions.

Project goals

A central goal of the project is to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programmes designed to support young people in planning their educational and employment paths. By analysing existing services and their impact, EDU-LAB aims to provide evidence-based recommendations for action to policymakers and practitioners across Europe. The project places great emphasis on including the perspectives of the young people themselves: Qualitative case studies and participatory research methods create space for the young people, their experiences, expectations and challenges and to reflect on the systems that are supposed to support them.

Research Questions

A series of key research questions serve as a guide: What factors influence young people's decisions regarding education, training and employment? How do policies and institutional frameworks in different countries affect these transitions? What obstacles or enabling conditions exist for young people from different backgrounds? How do young people perceive the options available to them, and what support do they find helpful or lacking?

Research methods

By combining comparative theoretical modelling, policy mapping and youth-led qualitative research, EDU-LAB aims to gain new insights that will not only advance the scientific discussion but also contribute to more effective and inclusive

policies. Ultimately, the project aims to design education and employment systems that work better – and more fairly – for all young people in Europe.

MAIN RESEARCH QUESTIONS



What Influences Young People's Choices?



What Gaps Exist in Support Systems?



How Do Young People Experience Transitions?



What Works Across Countries?



How Can Transitions Be More Equitable?



How Do Background and Institutions Matter?

Which Policies Make a Difference?



What Evidence Guides Better Decision-Making?



Looking Ahead

From preparation to fieldwork

After several months of the conceptual development, practical design and methodological alignment, EDU-LAB is now entering a decisive phase: the start of empirical fieldwork. Over the coming 12 months, two central strands of research – qualitative Case Studies and the international online survey of experts and stakeholders (OSes-Delphi) will be carried out, providing the basis for future analyses and policy recommendations.

Case Studies

The EDU-LAB case studies start in summer-autumn season of 2025, marking the beginning of the project's youth-oriented field research. The studies will follow a participatory research approach, in which young people will actively help shape the research process. In focus groups, participatory workshops and structured diaries, participants share their experiences, decision-making processes and insights into how they navigate education, training and employment.

The fieldwork is being conducted in 12 locations across 7 European countries:

- **Austria** (Vienna and Graz regions);
- **Finland** (Helsinki and Tampere regions);
- **Italy** (Bologna region);
- **Kosovo** (Pristina region);
- **Poland** (Warsaw and Łódź regions);
- **Portugal** (Porto and Santarém regions);
- **United Kingdom** (Birmingham and Worcestershire regions).

This selection ensures broad geographical, socio-economic and institutional diversity and covers a wide range of educational and labour market contexts. Between 600 and 960 young people (aged 15–30) will participate, representing different levels of education (ISCED 3–8) and labour market experiences – including straightforward, interrupted and non-linear transitions, as well as NEETs and school dropouts.

Data collection is qualitative in nature and follows the highest ethical and data protection standards (including GDPR compliance). In addition to an initial short sociodemographic survey, three core methods are used:

1. **Focus Groups** – exploring how young people experience and interpret their transitions and the barriers or enablers they face.
2. **Participatory Workshops** – where youth collaborate to co-develop concrete solutions to the challenges they identify.
3. **Structured Diaries** – providing longitudinal, personal insights into participants' day-to-day reflections over time.

Recruitment has already begun, and several teams have started on-boarding and initial data collection. All participating teams will be actively involved in fieldwork and initial analyses throughout the autumn of 2025.



OSSES-Delphi & Exploratory Expert Interviews

In parallel with the youth case studies, EDU-LAB is launching a multi-stage participation process involving institutional, academic and civil society actors. This line of research, coordinated within Work Package 3B, begins with a series of Exploratory Expert Interviews (EIs) that are being conducted from June to September 2025.



These semi-structured interviews – in all partner countries and beyond – build on thematic literature reviews and the expertise of the teams. They form the foundation for one of the project's central empirical research tools, namely the cross-country **Online Survey of Experts and Stakeholders** (OSSES), structured as a Delphi-type study.

The OSSES-Delphi will target six stakeholder clusters:

- Governance and administration in the sphere of general and professional education and training;
- Business actors and stakeholders involved in the co-design and implementation of various education and training programmes for young people;

- Teaching & administrative staff in the education and training institutions;
- Studying and working youth, as well as the civil society at large (at national, international and regional levels);
- Research and academic experts, including consultancies;
- International coordination and development organizations.

Participants are recruited from local, regional, national and international levels to ensure a diverse range of perspectives and expertise. The survey covers a broad range of topics and invites stakeholders to evaluate the effectiveness of existing systems, forecast trends and propose optimal policy and practical measures. Particular attention is paid to the inclusion challenges faced by certain groups of young people.

The first wave of OSSES-Delphi is planned for the end of 2025, with the second wave scheduled for spring 2026. The results will be presented and discussed in targeted workshops and seminars. Final outputs – including analysis reports, peer-reviewed publications and policy briefs—will be published by 2027.



The Consortium

The EDU-LAB consortium brings together eleven partner institutions from Europe and beyond. It combines academic, methodological and political expertise to study young people's transitions from education and training to employment. The partners contribute complementary knowledge from disciplines such as educational research, labour market research, policy evaluation, qualitative and quantitative research, stakeholder engagement and large-scale data analysis.

The consortium Partners are:

ECONOMICA Institute of
Economic Research (Austria)



Project coordinator. Leads project management (WP7) and dissemination (WP6), leads the OSES-Delphi effort

(WP3B) and coordinates stakeholder engagement.

Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg – EVALAG (Germany)



Leads WP1 on the development of the theoretical framework, ways and transitions, elements and data gaps.

University of Graz (Austria)



Contributes expertise in education systems, social inequality, comparative education research, and labour market transitions, with involvement across

multiple work packages. Implements Case Studies in Graz and Vienna.

Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg (Germany)



Provides methodological expertise in quantitative data analysis, longitudinal studies, and statistical modelling, contributing particularly to WP1, WP3A, and synthesis work.

Birmingham City University
(the United Kingdom)



BIRMINGHAM CITY
University

Contributes expertise on education policy, educational inequali-

ties, youth transitions, and supports policy evaluation work in WP2 and research integration in WP5. Implements Case Studies in Birmingham and Worcestershire regions.

AAB College (Kosovo)



Kolegji AAB

Contributes regional expertise on higher education systems,

youth policy, and youth transitions; participates in national case studies, stakeholder engagement, and qualitative research in WP4. Implements Case Study in Pristina region.

AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium (Italy)



ALMALAUREA

Provides access
to large-scale

graduate tracking data and supports quantitative research on education-to-work transitions under WP3. Implements Case Study in Bologna region.



CeiED at Lusófona University (Portugal)



UNIVERSIDADE
LUSÓFONA

Leads WP4 on qualitative case studies and participatory research with young people, coordinating fieldwork, focus groups, and participatory workshops across partner countries. Implements Case Studies in Porto and Santarém regions.

Maria Grzegorzewska University – MGU (Poland)

The Maria Grzegorzewska
UNIVERSITY
established 1922



Brings expertise in inclusive education, teacher training, and education policy; contributes to policy evaluation and qualitative research within WP2 and WP4. Implements Case Studies in Warsaw and Łódź regions.

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens – NKUA (Greece)



HELLENIC REPUBLIC
**National and Kapodistrian
University of Athens**
EST. 1837

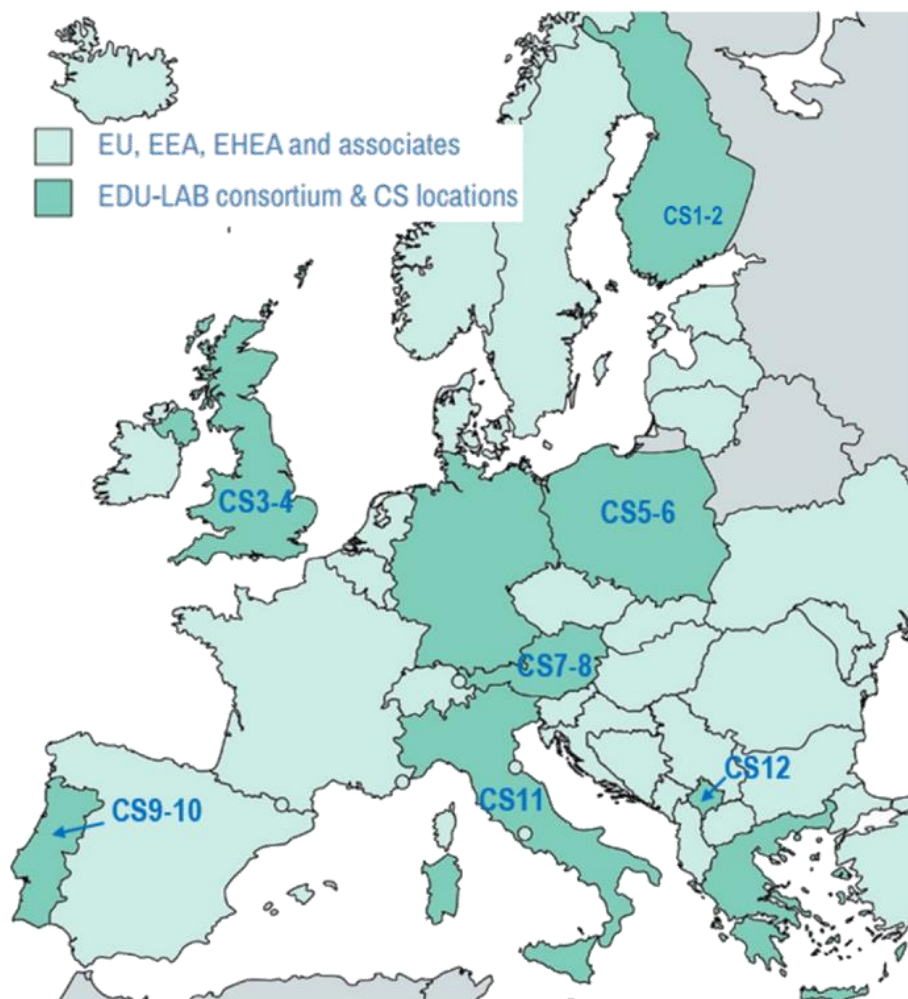
Leads WP5, responsible for synthesizing research results, developing policy recommendations, drafting policy briefs, and preparing integration outputs.

Tampere University – TAU (Finland)



Provides research expertise in youth welfare, educational transitions, and youth employment, contributing across multiple work packages including policy evaluation, fieldwork, and synthesis. Implements Case Studies in Tampere and Helsinki regions.

EDU-LAB geography: project partners and Case Study (CS) locations





EDULAB

Stay Connected with EDU-LAB

Follow the EDU-LAB project to stay updated on the latest research, results, and events as we explore youth transitions across Europe.



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A Horizon Europe collaborative project (2025–2027)
Grant Agreement # 101177428
Project Duration: 2025–2027

The Consortium

Economica Institute of Economic Research
Austria

National and Kapodistrian University of Athens
Greece

CeiED at Lusófona University, Lisbon and Porto
Portugal

Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg
Germany

Otto-Friedrich University of Bamberg
Germany

AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium
Italy

Kolegji AAB
Kosovo

Birmingham City University
United Kingdom

Maria Grzegorzewska University, Warsaw
Poland

University of Graz
Austria

Tampere University
Finland

2

EDU LAB

European Youth in Transition to
Education and **Labour**

Newsletter



Newsletter II



Funded by
the European Union

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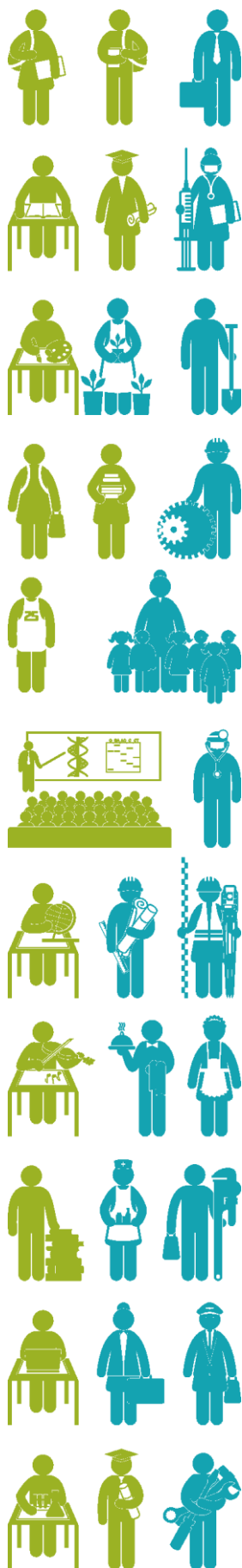
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The newsletter is published twice a year and provides half-yearly insights into the work and developments of the project.



A Note from the Coordinator



Dear readers,

As we approach the second year of EDU-LAB, the project continues to build a solid foundation new and enhanced knowledge about how young people shape the transition between education and the labour market. Over the past few months, partners across Europe have been actively engaged in dialogue, reflection and preparation for the next steps in our work. These joint efforts are helping us to refine our thematic focus, adjust the methodology and secure better integration of several research streams in the project pursued in various work packages.

The coming year will open up even more opportunities for collaboration and shared learning. Our teams are preparing for broader involvement of experts and the expansion of field research activities, which will allow us to capture diverse perspectives and experiences from our case study regions. We are also looking forward to upcoming meetings and exchange formats that will further support the overall development of the project.

I would like to thank all partners for their continued commitment and cooperation. Together, we are developing meaningful insights that will accompany the project as it moves into its next phase.

Warm regards,

Dr. Alexander Chvorostov (Project Coordinator)
and the whole EDU-LAB Project Consortium

Modelling Education and Labour Market Pathways

Work Package 1 (WP1) lays the conceptual and analytical foundations for EDU-LAB by examining how young people move through education and training systems and enter the labour market. WP1 is led by the Evaluation Agency Baden-Württemberg (EVALAG), with Prof. Theodor Leiber coordinating the work. WP1's focus is on the structured and comparative mapping of educational pathways and transitions.

Developing a Structural Model of Pathways

Based on a narrative literature analysis and the synthesis of existing research, WP1 has developed a preliminary qualitative structural model of education and training pathways. This covers general education, vocational education and training, and transitions to the labour market. This model provides a high-level overview of how different educational pathways are connected and where key decision-making and transition points lie and forms a basis for integrating intersectional factors that influence access, participation, progression and successful completion within education systems.

This initial model will be further refined in later project phases, including updates to reflect the most recent set of identified determinants and transitions

Mapping Transitions within Education and to the Labour Market

In parallel, a comprehensive set of transitions within education and training pathways and between education and the world of labour have been identified. Drawing on document analysis, including CEDEFOP charts, this work distinguishes between legally regulated transitions within education systems and broader transitions such as moving between institutions, fields of study, countries, or employment statuses.

This mapping supports the identification of data gaps and informs later analytical work by clarifying which transitions are covered by existing datasets.

Next Steps

In the coming phases, the main effort will be continuing to refine both the structural models and the transition mappings and strengthening the analytical backbone that supports EDU-LAB's empirical and comparative research.



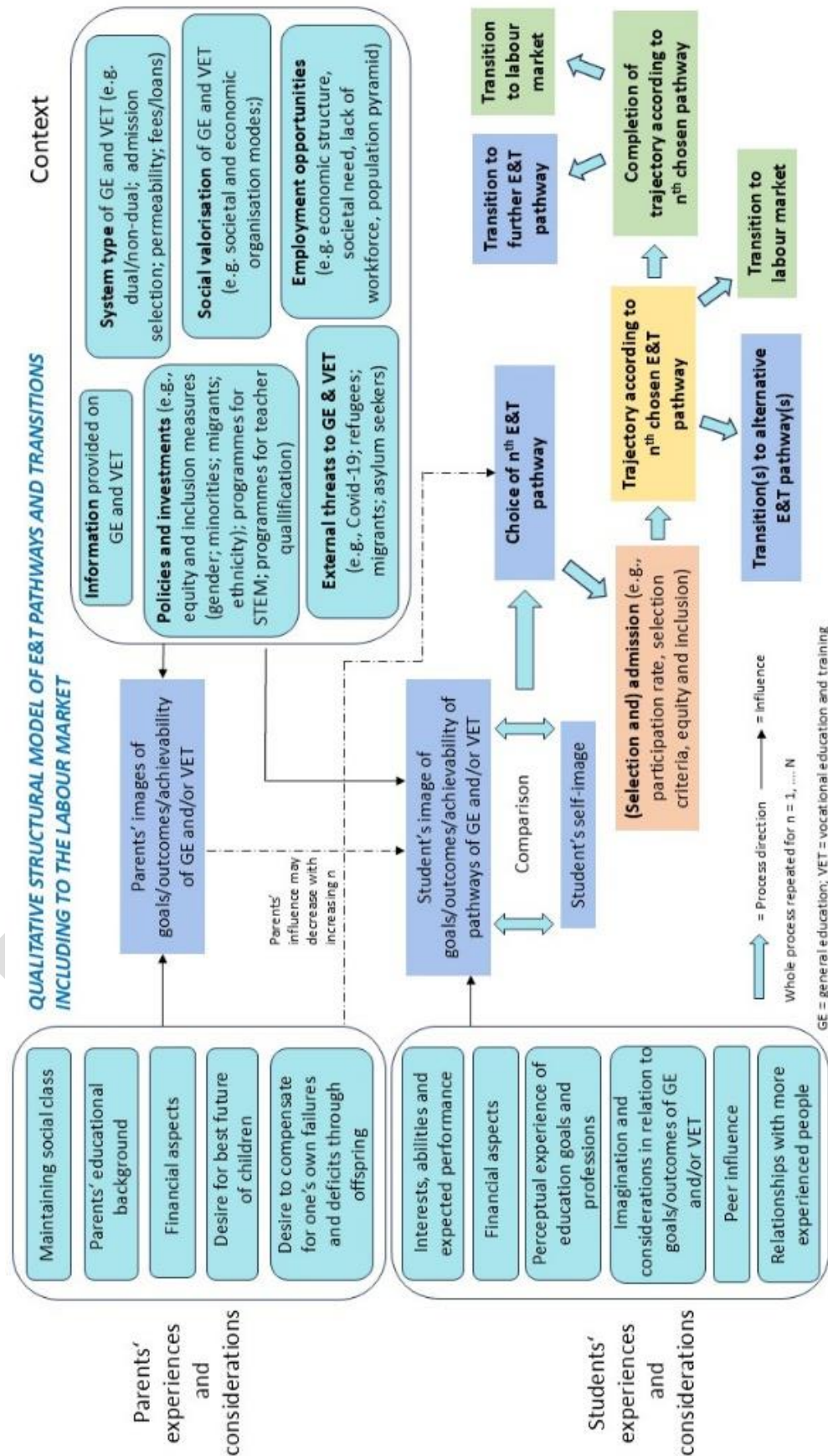


Figure 1. Figure 1: Qualitative structural model of E&T pathways and transitions

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Analysing Education and Labour Market Transitions through Data

Work Package 3A (WP3A) aims to gain deeper insights into education and training pathways by analysing existing large-scale data sets. The goal is to better understand how young people navigate transitions within general education, vocational education and training, and the labour market, taking into account social, economic and political factors.

Secondary data analysis of education and labour-market pathways

WP3A conducts in-depth secondary analyses of high-quality, freely accessible and scientific data sets covering countries in the European Education Area, with a particular focus on those countries that are also represented in the project's case studies. These analyses examine how intersectional determinants – such as socio-economic background, institutional contexts and political frameworks – influence access, participation, progression and successful completion of education and training pathways.

This work builds directly on the conceptual foundations developed in WP1, ensuring a strong link between theoretical modelling and empirical evidence.

Building a strong data foundation

A key milestone achieved so far is the identification and structuring of 49 relevant datasets that form the general sample for the analyses in WP3A. Each data set was systematically checked in terms of structure, variables and metadata to ensure that it was suitable for the project's research questions. In addition, exploratory variable mapping was carried out to assess the extent to which existing data adequately reflect key determinants and transitions.

Current focus and next steps

WP3A is currently conducting in-depth analyses of the National Education Panel Study (NEPS) in Germany. This work tracks educational biographies across school, vocational and higher education phases, including transitions into the labour market and back into education and training, as well as patterns of re-entry.

In the coming project phases, WP3A will extend these analyses to additional data sets and countries, thereby contributing robust empirical evidence to EDU-LAB's overall understanding of transitions from education to employment.



OSes-Delphi Progress: From Expert Voices to Structured Foresight

Work Package 3B (WP3B) made significant progress in 2025 by completing the qualitative basis for the online survey of experts and stakeholders (OSes). Through an extensive round of exploratory expert interviews (EIs), the WP3B team gathered rich and context-sensitive insights that are now being incorporated into the preparation of a structured, Delphi-like online consultation. With the project transitioning into 2026, WP3B is preparing to launch the two-round OSes survey.

Exploratory Expert Interviews

Between July and October 2025, national research teams in all EDU-LAB countries conducted a total of 47 expert interviews, supplemented by interviews with international experts. Those interviewed included specialists with expertise in education systems, labour markets, economic sectors and policies on the transition of young people from education to the labour market. The interviews were conducted either in the participants' native languages or in English and lasted between 30 and 110 minutes.

All interviews were recorded, translated and summarised according to a standardised procedure coordinated by Economica. This resulted in a consistent set of English-language summaries and transcripts, which form the basis for further analysis.

Key themes emerging from the interviews

The interviews highlighted several recurring challenges that shape education and labour market transitions. Experts pointed to discrepancies between educational provision and labour market needs, limited availability of practical and workplace-based learning opportunities, and unequal access to guidance and support services. Digital transformation and the rapid development of new technologies were identified as both opportunities and risks, particularly in terms of skills gaps and unequal access.

Social inequalities were frequently cited as a key factor influencing education and employment outcomes, as were governance challenges related to coordination between institutions and policy levels. Many experts also emphasised the importance of motivation, agency and well-being for young people's education and employment trajectories.

From interviews to the OSes Delphi survey

The findings from the EIs are currently being compiled into a series of thematic statements that will form the basis of the Delphi-like OSes survey. These statements will be evaluated by experts in terms of their significance, policy relevance and expected future development. The first round of the OSes survey is planned

TIMELINE

EXPLORATORY EXPERT INTERVIEWS

(May–October 2025)

1

2

DELPHI ROUND 1

(January–February 2026)

DELPHI ROUND 2

(March–April 2026)

3

4

ANALYSIS, DISSEMINATION OF RESULTS, PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS, AND WRITING AND COMMUNICATION OF POLICY BRIEFS

July 2026–December 2027)

for early 2026 and will be followed by a second round, which will allow participants to reflect on aggregated group feedback and contribute to a structured collective foresight.





Data collection within WP4 takes place in seven European countries at a total of twelve locations and covers a wide range of education systems, labour market structures and socio-economic contexts. The case study locations include Austria (Vienna, Graz), Finland (Helsinki, Tampere), Italy (Bologna), Kosovo (Pristina), Poland (Warsaw, Łódź), Portugal (Porto, Santarém) and the United Kingdom (Birmingham, Worcestershire).

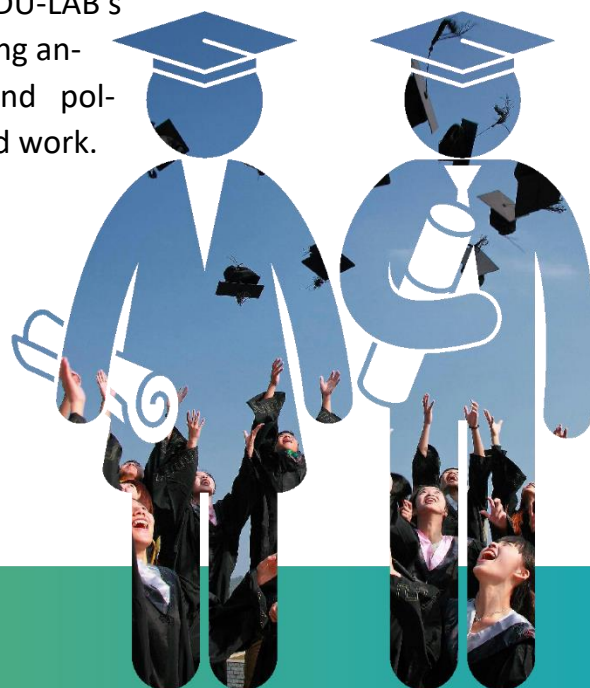
At these locations, WP4 will involve a total of between 600 and 960 young people aged 15 to 30, including those in education, training and employment, as well as young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET).

Methods and current progress

WP4 plans to involve between 600 and 960 young people aged between 15 and 30, including those in education, training and employment, as well as young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Recruitment began in May 2025 and is ongoing. It is supported by local, trusted partners who facilitate access, onboarding and safe participation conditions.

Data collection is carried out through focus groups, participatory workshops and weekly structured diaries. The focus groups examine young people's views, experiences and expectations regarding transitions to education and the labour market. Participatory workshops bring together young people of similar ages to analyse challenges and develop solutions together over several sessions. The structured diaries and independent work enable participants to reflect on their experiences over a longer period of time and in their respective contexts.

Data collection and analysis are carried out in parallel and will continue until autumn 2026. They provide a rich qualitative evidence base for EDU-LAB's overarching analytical and policy-related work.



EDU-LAB in the Horizon Europe Landscape

EDU-LAB is part of a wider group of Horizon Europe projects working on youth transitions, educational pathways, and labour-market challenges. This brief overview highlights projects funded under the same Horizon Europe topic, as well as closely related initiatives where collaboration opportunities have already been identified.

Projects under the same HE topic



NEXT-UP examines how the COVID-19 crisis has reshaped young people's transitions from education to work. Using interdisciplinary and innovative methods, it works with stakeholders to co-create future-oriented, inclusive policies that support diverse youth groups.



BRIDGE
Building Resilient Individuals
Through Effective
Gradual Educational Transitions

BRIDGE investigates how to improve participation and completion in upper-secondary and tertiary education. By analysing schooling

transitions and policy effects, it aims to generate evidence-based recommendations that promote equity and high-quality learning opportunities.



VETprep

Empowering Europe's Youth through VET

VETprep focuses on Vocational Education and Training systems in five European countries. It studies participation, retention, and the post-pandemic challenges facing VET, helping policymakers understand how to support diverse learners and reduce early leaving.

Thematically related projects



ISABEL

MINIMIZE COSTS AND MAXIMIZE BENEFITS IN THE TRANSITIONARY EUROPEAN REGIONAL LABOUR MARKETS

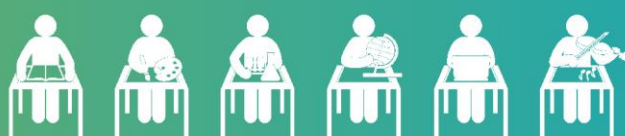
ISABEL analyses how the green transition transforms labour markets, with a focus on uneven regional and social impacts. Using advanced data techniques and living labs, it explores pathways for fair reskilling, labour reallocation, and skills development in rapidly changing economic environments.



EFFECT

Enhancing Efficiency and
Effectiveness in Education

EFFECT evaluates the efficiency and equity of education systems and policies across Europe. Through multidisciplinary approaches and evidence-based evaluations, it examines teacher development, learning environments, and targeted interventions, generating insights to improve educational quality and support diverse learners.



Meet EDU-LAB Partners

EDU-LAB brings together a diverse group of organisations from across Europe, each contributing unique expertise to the project. In every issue of this newsletter, we highlight two partners to showcase their role and perspectives within the consortium.

Partner Highlight 1: AAB College



Kolegji AAB

CILËSI. LEADERSHIP. SUKSESI!

A dynamic higher education institution shaping knowledge in Kosovo and the Western Balkans

AAB College is the largest non-public higher education institution in Kosovo, offering an extensive range of programmes across social sciences, medical sciences, linguistics, computer sciences, arts, and sports. Since its founding in 2000, AAB has focused on building strong academic capacity, promoting innovation, and strengthening its connections with the wider region.



Figure 3: EDU-LAB Kickoff Event in Kosovo

Within EDU-LAB, AAB plays a central coordination role across several Work Packages and

leads the project's case study in Kosovo. The team brings together expertise in education research, teacher development, curriculum design, and qualitative methodologies. Their long-standing experience in national education reform and international cooperation supports the project's broader objectives of improving young people's transitions from education to the labour market.

The AAB team is led by **Dr. Xhavit Rexhaj**, an expert with more than 35 years of experience in higher education research, policy-making, and curriculum design. Together with colleagues **Dr. Arbëresha Qerimi**, **Dr. Arbërore Bicaj**, and **Ereëza Mehmeti**, the team contributes across methodological, analytical, and dissemination activities.

Highly engaged in regional and international networks, AAB enriches EDU-LAB with strong local insights and a deep understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing education systems in the Western Balkans..

Partner Highlight 2: AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium



A national network advancing graduate research and labour-market knowledge

The AlmaLaurea Interuniversity Consortium is a unique collaboration of 82 Italian universities, representing around 90% of graduates nationwide. As part of Italy's National Statistical System, AlmaLaurea conducts large-scale annual surveys on graduates'



educational paths, skills, and employment outcomes, supporting evidence-based policy and institutional planning.

In EDU-LAB, AlmaLaurea leads the Italian case study and contributes its extensive experience in graduate tracking, data management, and labour-market analysis. Their ability to produce reliable, longitudinal datasets offers valuable insights into young people's study-to-work transitions and the factors that shape them across time.

The team is coordinated by Prof. Marina Timoteo, full professor of Comparative Private Law at the University of Bologna and Director of AlmaLaurea. With long-standing

experience in higher education research, international cooperation, and graduate studies, she oversees the consortium's survey operations and strategic development. Researchers Dr. Dorel Manițiu and Dr. Luisa Mengoni bring additional expertise in EU-funded capacity-building projects, data analysis, and research management.

AlmaLaurea's contribution strengthens EDU-LAB's comparative dimension and expands the project's ability to interpret educational and labour-market trajectories across different socio-institutional contexts.



Project Facts & Figures

2025 Progress Snapshot

With the completion of the first project year, EDU-LAB has made steady progress in the areas of expert engagement, field research and consortium collaboration. This snapshot provides a brief overview of the status of the project at the end of 2025, while the accompanying infographic highlights key metrics and contextual indicators that define the scope of our work.

Over the course of the year, the project partners conducted a total of 47 exploratory expert interviews, gathering perspectives from a diverse group of stakeholders across Europe. Preparations for the first round of the online survey of experts and stakeholders (OSES) are underway and will serve to expand the network of experts and deepen thematic understanding. In parallel, initial activities have begun at twelve case study sites in seven countries, laying the groundwork for field research that will continue into 2026.

These activities are unfolding against the backdrop of a broader European landscape that continues to be characterised by persistent challenges in the transitions of young people. Recent Eurostat data show that 9.5% of young people leave school early, while 11.2% are classified as NEET (not in education, employment or training). At the same time, over 70% of employers report skills and competence shortages, underscoring the relevance of EDU-LAB's focus on equitable and

EDU-LAB Project Facts & Figures — 2025 Progress Snapshot

PROJECT PROGRESS INDICATORS

47



Exploratory Expert Interviews completed (WP3B)



12 case study locations across 7 countries



Austria: Vienna, Graz; **Finland:** Tampere, Helsinki; **Italy:** Bologna; **Kosovo:** Pristina; **Poland:** Warsaw, Łódź; **Portugal:** Porto, Santarém; **UK:** Birmingham, Worcestershire



7 partner countries involved in the project



Consortium-wide collaboration through regular meetings and cross-WP exchange

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SNAPSHOT



Stakeholders engaged: policymakers, educators, employers, researchers, civil society organisations



International reach with experts from multiple sectors and countries



Expanding participation as OSES Round 1 approaches

THEMATIC CONTEXT INDICATORS



~9%

Early school leaving rate in the EU. **Why it matters:** highlights uneven transitions into work.



~43%

Tertiary education attainment among young adults. **Why it matters:** rising qualifications but unequal outcomes.



~11%

NEET rate (youth not in employment, education, or training). **Why it matters:** shows persistent vulnerability for many young people.



~75%

Employers reporting skills shortages (varies by country). **Why it matters:** signals need for better guidance, training, and education-to-work alignment.

LOOKING AHEAD



OSES Round 1 launch — expanded expert engagement



Athens Conference (February 2026) — consortium meeting and dissemination



Continued case study fieldwork — deeper data collection across sites



Cross-WP synthesis — connecting expert input with case study findings

Sources: Eurostat (2024), CEDEFOP European Skills and Jobs Survey, OECD Skills for Jobs Database.



Funded by
the European Union

effective transitions from education to employment.

A visual summary of these developments and the upcoming project milestones for early 2026 can be found in the infographic accompanying this article.

EDU-LAB Engagement, Visibility, and Collaboration Activities

In recent months, EDU-LAB has further increased its visibility and strengthened collaboration through active participation in several international conferences, scientific meetings and Horizon Europe cluster events. These activities supported the project's dissemination goals while promoting intensive exchange with researchers, policy makers and practitioners in Europe and beyond.

In July 2025, Filomena Parada, head of WP4, represented EDU-LAB at the biennial conference of the Society for Vocational Psychology (SVP) in Lausanne, Switzerland. Organised by the SVP, the European Society for Vocational Designing and Career Counselling (ESVDC) and the University of Lausanne, the conference was themed 'Bridges in Vocational Psychology'. Filomena Parada presented EDU-LAB's qualitative case study design, which focuses on young people as active knowledge producers. Her contribution showed how the project combines the expertise of young people with academic research, thus going beyond traditional, adult-centred approaches to the study of educational and employment trajectories.



1 Society for Vocational Psychology (SVP) Conference, Lausanne

Early autumn brought a series of other impactful events for EDU-LAB. On 7 November 2025, Dr Alexander Chvorostov presented the project at the NEXT-UP cluster event at the University of Trento. The event brought together Horizon Europe projects funded in the thematic area of 'Effective education and labour market transitions for young people', including NEXT-UP, BRIDGE and VETPREP. The EDU-LAB presentation introduced the project objectives, methodological approach and initial progress, and contributed to a constructive exchange on synergies and future cooperation opportunities within the cluster.

In Kosovo, EDU-LAB gained additional visibility by participating in several scientific events. At the International Scientific Conference on Lifelong Learning (18–19 September 2025), organised by the Kosovo Pedagogic Institute, Prof. Xhavit Rexhaj gave a keynote speech on challenges and opportunities in Kosovo's pre-school and school education system and presented the objectives and research design of EDU-LAB. Shortly afterwards, he took part in the MESTI scientific round table discussion on 'Interdisciplinary

Sciences in Kosovo', where he emphasised the importance of research development and international networking. Prof. Rexhaj had previously represented EDU-LAB at the 11th International Workshop on Efficiency in Education, Health, and Other Public Services in Budapest, where he gave a presentation on systemic performance and moderated a breakout session.

field research and analysis phases, continued participation in such events remains crucial to strengthening collaboration, sharing new insights, and ensuring broad dissemination of the project results.



2 International Workshop on Efficiency in Education, Health, and Other Public Services in Budapest



3 International Scientific Conference on Lifelong Learning in Pristina

Overall, these activities highlight EDU-LAB's growing presence in the international research landscape. As the project enters the



Tampere University
Finland