

Tr@ck-in Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs



WP 2 - MAPPING Overview on rural NEETs - ITALY

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Preface

This report is an output of Track-IN | Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs whose aim is to deliver an evaluation model of the effectiveness of Public Employment Services (PES) tracking support types. The goal is to respond to the challenges of the mismatch between broadband policy package aims and the needs of NEETs in rural areas and contribute to a greater visibility of the constraints and needs that young people face in rural areas.

The Track-IN project comprises a comparative 6-country case study (Portugal, Italy, Estonia, Lithuania, Spain, and Bulgaria), approached by three studies. In Work package 2 (WP2) the propose is to map the best practices in tracking young people aged between 25-29 years old, living in rural areas, and who are currently in a NEET situation (not in employment, education, or training). Methodologically, WP2 includes a comparative case study of different PES tracking support types programs foreseeing several steps: mapping (identifying all rural PES across the beneficiary countries, using Eurostat Labour Force Survey (2018) collapsed by degree of urbanization to delimit the territorial research scope); Screening (through a short survey, to target rural PES tracking practices fitting the project); Data collection (including in-depth analysis of selected cases using a multi-informant approach (PES administrative data; program documentation analysis; interviews with PES managers; world-café sessions with NEETs).

This report is the result of the phase of WP2 – mapping - an overview on rural NEETS, outlining in detail the situation of rural NEETs aged between 25 and 29 years old, over the last decade (2011-2021) in each beneficiary partner country. The overview will include indicators on youth population, youth employment and unemployment, education, and NEETs distribution. The characterization of all indicators will adopt the degree of urbanization as a central criterion, enabling proportional comparisons between rural areas, towns and suburbs, and cities. These analyses are further collapsed into age subgroups and, when possible, in sex groups for greater detail.

The statistical procedures adopted across the different selected dimensions where: descriptive longitudinal analysis; using graphical displays (e.g., overlay line charts); and, whenever relevant, the calculation of proportional absolute and relative changes between 2011, 2015 and 2021, and finally 2011 and 2021. These time ranges were chosen to capture the indicators evolution before and after the economic and financial crisis which hit European countries in the beginning of the decade and, more recently, to capture the impact of COVID19 pandemic crises. All data was extracted from Eurostat public datasets.

Ana Sofia Ribeiro and Tatiana Ferreira (ICS-ULisboa)

Introduction

This report proceeds in three sections. It begins with an introductory contextualisation with the most relevant information about Italian social, economic and political situation and key youth policies based on a relevant literature review. A methodological note explains the database used and the statistical operations undertaken. The most extensive section of the report refers to the analysis performed, with a specific focus on young people (25-29 years old), by degree of urbanisation and concerning four main topics: population; employment; education; NEETs.

The report ends with a brief conclusion that highlights the main results regarding the topics explored.

Contextualization

Geographical characterization

Italy is located in the south of Europe. It is a peninsula of about 1300 km long. Italy also has two large islands: Sicily and Sardinia; the natural border in the north is the Alps, while in the south, east and west it is bordered by the seas:

- ✓ Adriatic Sea (east);
- ✓ Tyrrhenian Sea (west);
- ✓ Ligurian Sea (north-west, below Liguria);
- ✓ Ionian Sea (south, between the regions of Puglia, Calabria and Basilicata).

All these seas are part of the Mediterranean Sea. The Italian coasts are about 7.500 km long and occupy a large part of the Italian territory. Within the Italian territory, the states of Vatican City, San Marino (enclaves of the Republic), and Campione d'Italia (exclave) can be found.

Figure 1-Map of Italy, by regions



Source: <https://www.bambinopoli.it/Italia/Italia.php>

Population

Italy is the third largest country in the European Union by population (after Germany and France), with a total of 60,359.546 inhabitants. (Bilancio demografico Istat <http://www.demo.istat.it/bilmens2018gen/>).

According to the latest ISTAT data as of 1 January 2017, young people up to 14 years old are almost 100 000 fewer than in 2016 and account for 13.5% of the total. The number of people over 65 is increasing by 160,000 and now accounts for 22.6% of the population. Foreign nationals are also increasing steadily and, as of 1 January 2018, accounted for 8.5% of the total. Demographically, Italy remains one of the countries with the lowest birth rate in the world.

The total number of young people aged between 15 and 34 in January 2015 (ISTAT survey) is 12,841 (21.1% of the total population), of which young people aged between 15 and 24 are 5.947 (9,85 of the total population), those aged between 25 and 29 are 3.282 (5.4% of the population), those aged between 30 and 34 are 3.612 (5.9% of the population).

Economic situation in the last decade

Italy belongs to the world's lowest-growth area and is itself the country with the slowest progress. In 2017 it made progress of 1.5% but remains in an uncomfortable situation, burdened by unemployment of 10-11% expected to remain almost unchanged in 2019.

The recent pandemic has increased the level of economic crisis. Italy, which is one of the worst affected countries in Europe in terms of contagions and human lives lost, has seen its GDP fall by 8.8% by 2020. The causes are obviously the blockage of internal social and productive activities, but also the greater dependence of our economy on services, for example. The Covid-19 crisis has brought Italy's public debt to 160% of GDP. At best, this figure could stabilise over the next two years. All governments and central banks have deployed extraordinary measures, both monetary and fiscal, to deal with this crisis. In particular, large amounts of state aid have helped to absorb the shock caused by the crisis, helping many companies affected by the pandemic.

Administrative structure of the country

Italy is a parliamentary republic. The Italian legal system is bicameral: the Parliament is composed of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate of the Republic, each having the same powers. In the Italian political system, the President of the Council of Ministers is appointed by the President of the Republic to form the government, for which he is responsible within the Parliament. The President of the Republic is the Head of State,

the guarantor of the Constitution, and representative of national unity. The administrative structure of the country includes territorial entities which, together with the State, constitute the Italian Republic. These include: 20 regions (15 with an ordinary statute and 5 with a special statute); 14 metropolitan cities; 93 provinces and 7904 municipalities (ISTAT data for the year 2020).

Youth policy

Compared to other sectors, youth policies in Italy are relatively recent and have developed on multiple levels: the [Central Government, Regions, and Autonomous Provinces](#) agree on the drafting of legislation, while local authorities, the third sector, and youth organisations are actively involved in “bottom-up” planning and implementation.

The [Department for Youth Policy and Universal Civil Service](#) forms the support structure for the President of the Council of Ministers. It exists to promote and connect government actions in order to ensure the implementation of policies in favour of youth and universal civil service as well as conscientious objection.

Since 2006, the National Youth Policy Fund has been funding measures aimed at promoting various measures, including: non-formal and informal education; access of young people to the labour market, including the development of start-ups and youth entrepreneurship; social inclusion and specific measures to reach marginalised and vulnerable groups; participation and rights of young people; cultural activities, talent development; prevention and measures against addiction; and, volunteering and access to international and European programs and projects.

In 2019, the Minister put forward the following national policy priorities: social inclusion, participation; support for young people; prevention, and measures against new addictions.

Education system

The Italian school system is structured in three educational cycles: primary, which lasts five years; secondary, which includes first level secondary school, which lasts three years, and second level secondary school, which lasts five years; higher level, which includes university and specialist training, such as master and specialisation school. Mandatory schooling is set at 16 years old.

After the reform introduced by the Bologna Process, the university cycle of studies is divided into three phases: bachelor’s degree (3 years), master’s degree (2 years), Ph.D. (3 years).

Labour market

Beginning in 2013, the Department for Youth Policies and Universal Civil Service signed [agreements](#) with the Regions for the implementation of direct interventions. These interventions aimed to create Centres/Forms of youth aggregation, aimed at improving young people's encounters, the prevention of youth hardship, and the support of young talents (funding actions to support young people in the expression of their talent and creativity), as well as orientation and placement activities.

Italy is also a member of the [Youth Guarantee](#), a program launched in 2013 to reduce youth unemployment through European funds.

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Social inclusion

Some of the national policies are characterised as a set of measures aimed at supporting the incomes of individuals and families, with a special focus on active inclusion interventions, aimed at the gradual achievement of autonomy; another line of action is dedicated, instead, to the quantitative and qualitative analysis of emerging poverty phenomena, to the study of extreme poverty conditions and to the definition of appropriate modes of intervention.

Among the income support measures, in particular, there is the Citizenship Income, which citizens can apply for as of 6 March 2019, obliging themselves to follow a personalised path of employment and social inclusion.

Covid-19 pandemic crisis

As documented by the Youth Report (Toniolo Institute, 2021), Italy already had worrying fragilities and inequalities in the educational, professional and life paths of the new generations before the pandemic, which are now having significant effects on mental health and causing insecurity about the future at a social level.

Schools are one of the areas most affected by the consequences of the pandemic. The Italian education system, characterised by a strong backwardness in the field of new technologies, had to face during the first phase of the lockdown the sudden shift to distance learning (DAD). Subsequently, it has had to periodically reorganise courses in presence, in mixed form or at a distance, depending on government and regional regulations. It was mainly young adults (secondary school and university students) who were deprived of face-to-face teaching for longer periods of time and thus of the possibility of learning and interacting with classmates and teachers. The latest statistics tell us that 12.7% of students did not take advantage of DAD, remaining cut off from the educational process (AGCOM, 2020b).

With regard to the labour market, however, European countries, whose unemployment rates were already high even in the pre-pandemic period, have seen a further worsening of the situation. According to the data of the Istituto Toniolo's international survey on 'Young people and Covid-19', as early as March a high proportion of young people interviewed perceived their work and economic situation as being at risk due to the pandemic, albeit with significant differences between countries. In particular, in Italy more than 40% of men and more than 50% of women perceived their jobs and individual and family income as being at risk. In Italy, youth unemployment rates increased in the months following the adoption of measures to contain the spread of the virus (from March 2020). Moreover, Italy is the country that has seen a worsening of the situation of NEETs out of the total population of 15-24 year-olds. In fact, the proportion of NEETs increased equally for men and women between 2019 and 2020.

Methodological note

The Italian national report uses information gathered by the ICS-ULisboa team (working package2 coordinator) of the **Track-IN** project via the Eurostat platform. The main data presented and analysed in this report are from the following Eurostat database:

- Population Statistics: [yth_demo_020];
- EU Labour Force Survey (EU-LFS): [lfst_r_pgauwsc]; [lfst_r_ergau]; [lfst_r_urgau]; [edat_lfs_9913]; [edat_lfse_30]; [edat_lfse_29]; [edat_lfse_34]; [trng_lfs_14].

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Selected indicators were extracted from the different databases according to two criteria:

Time range: the previous decade (2011-2021) to have a sufficiently long period of time to capture the main changes and continuities in young people's trajectories in education, training, and employment and to capture the impact of the economic and financial crisis that hit Europe in 2008 and the first impact of the pandemic crisis.

Age group: 25-29 years old (the target group) and other age groups (15-24; 25-29; 30-34 years old) to make a comparable analysis within age groups - according to available data in each indicator.

In addition to a descriptive analysis, and in order to compare the main data changes and continuities in different time periods, absolute and relative change were calculated by considering the 3 main time points that were selected, namely 2011, 2013 and 2021. Absolute change refers to the simple difference in the indicator over two periods in time and is expressed in percentage points (pp). Relative change expresses the change of a value of an indicator during an earlier period and is expressed in percentage terms.

Data analysis

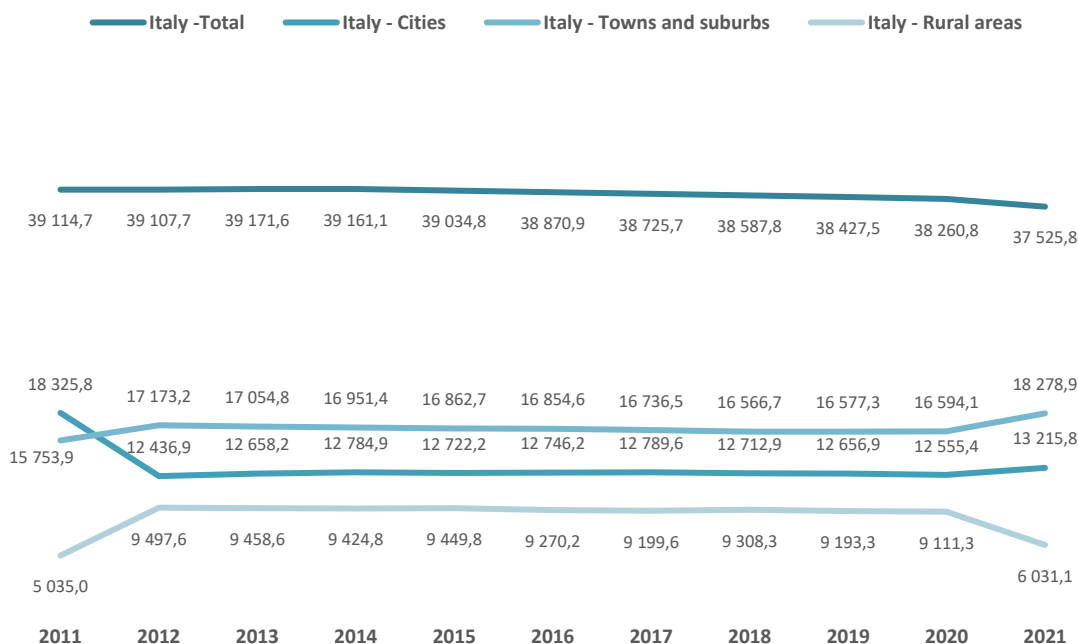
Population and youth population

From 2011 to 2021, youth population remained more or less constant with a slight decline in both urban, sub-urban and rural areas.

The chart below highlights the evolution of the total Italian population aged 15-64 years old for different degrees of urbanisation, between 2011 and 2021. According to the chart, the total population is slightly declining. In 2011, there were 39,114.7 people aged 15-64 in Italy; that number declined to 37,525.8 in 2021. In terms of the degree of urbanisation, in 2011, the largest number of people resided in cities (18,325.8), followed by towns and suburbs (15,753.9), and rural areas (5,035). In 2021, the situation remains unchanged in view of the general population reduction: the largest part of people continues to live in the city (18,278.9) followed by people who live in towns and suburbs (13,215.8). Rural areas experience a slight increase (6,031.1).

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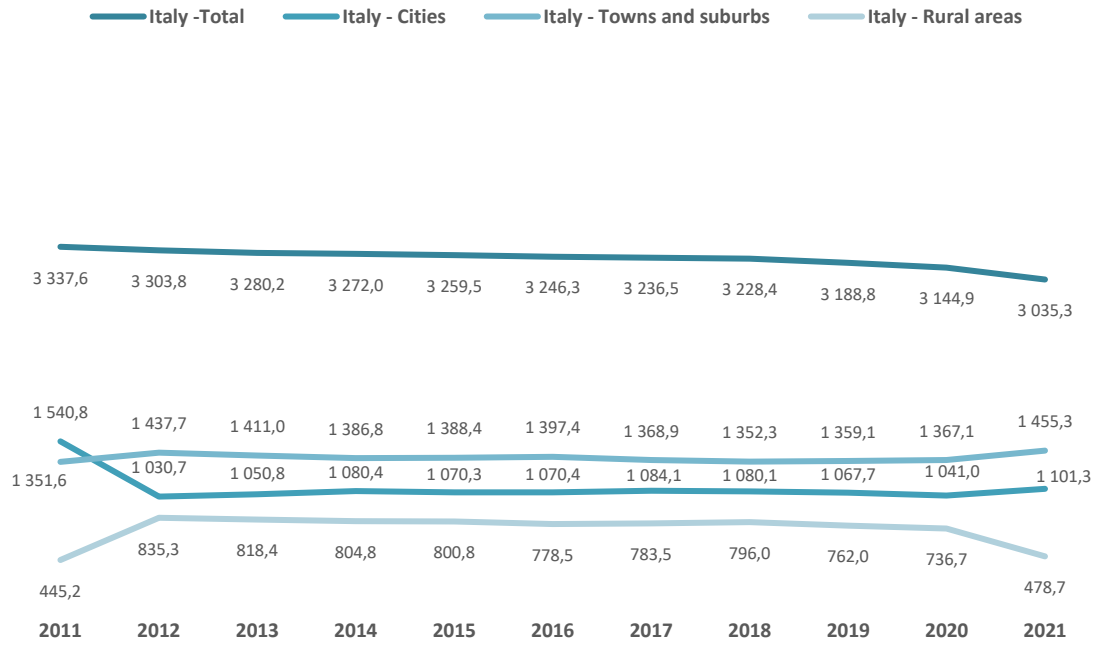
Chart 1-Total population, 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (thousands)



Source: Eurostat (lfsa_pgauws) – data extracted on 08.05.2022

According to Chart 2, overall, the youth population ratio in Italy has been declining between 2011 (3.337,6) and 2021 (3.035,3).

Chart 2-Youth population (25-29 Years), 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (thousands)



Source: Eurostat (lfsa_pgauws) – data extracted on 08.05.2022

Employment and Unemployment

Youth employment

Youth employment decreased between 2011 and 2021, peaking in 2014. only in rural areas is there a slight increase in the last year (2021). a slight increase in the last year (2021).

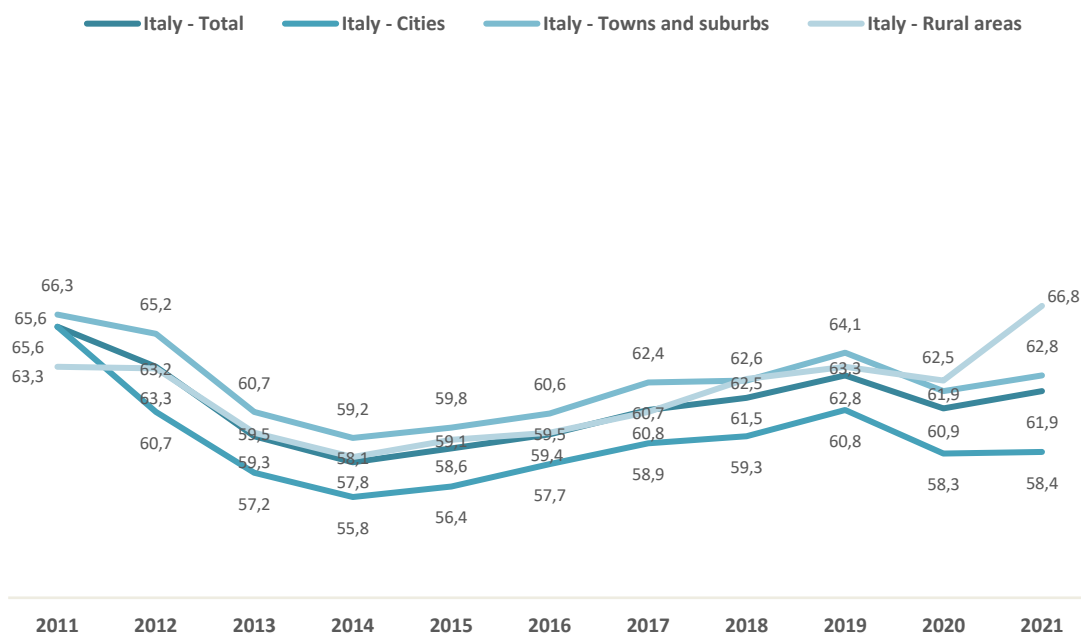
Below is a description of young Italians' employment indexes (25-29 years) for 2011 and 2021. The data will be described considering the degree of urbanisation as detailed in Chart 3. 2011 is characterised by an overall youth employment rate of 65.6%, which in cities remains exactly the same, in towns and suburbs 66.3%, and in rural areas 63.3%.

2014 is the year with the largest reduction in the employment rate among young people in the age group under consideration (total rate is 59.8%): which in cities is reduced to 55.8%, in towns and suburbs 59.2% and in rural areas 59.1%.

2021 is characterised by an overall youth employment rate of 64.9%, 58.4% in cities, 62.8% in towns and suburbs, and the highest rate (66.8%) in rural areas.

The chart below compares the trend in youth employment by degree of urbanisation from 2011 to 2021. As explained above, from 2011 to 2021 there was a decrease in the level of youth employment.

Chart 3-Youth Employment (25-29 Years), 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_ergrau) – data extracted on 08.05.2022

The chart clearly shows a substantial decrease, reaching its lowest level in 2014 for cities (55.8%) as well as towns and suburbs (59.2%) and for rural areas (59.1%). As a result of this peak, rates seem to be recovering, although much more slowly. In conclusion, cities have been most affected over time, both in terms of numbers and intensity.

Youth unemployment:

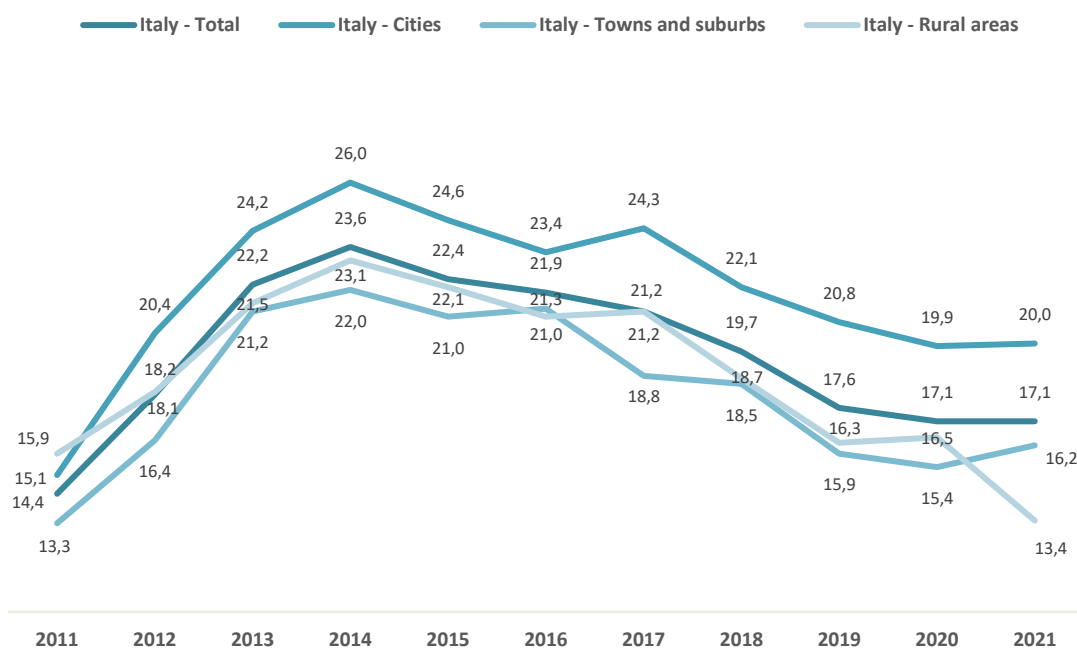
Similarly, youth unemployment increases from 2011 to 2021 with a peak in 2014. From that year onwards there is a decrease, although values are generally higher than in 2011. This section describes the ratio of youth unemployment in 2011, 2014 and 2021, taking into account the degree of urbanisation.

The overall unemployment rate in 2011 was 14.4%. More specifically, as can be seen from Chart 4, youth unemployment is higher in rural areas (15.9%) followed by cities (15.1%) and towns and suburbs (13.3%).

2014 is characterised by an overall unemployment rate of 23.6%. Unemployment is higher in cities where it reaches 26%, followed by rural areas with 23.1% and towns and suburbs with 22%.

Compared to 2014, 2021 shows a generalised decrease in youth unemployment. However, as shown in Chart 4, the pre-2014 levels do not seem to have been reached. It can be seen that cities manifest the biggest increase.

Chart 4-Youth Unemployment (25-29 Years), 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (lfst_r_urgrau) – data extracted on 08.05.2022

The chart illustrated above shows the development of the youth unemployment rate from 2011 until 2021. It is interesting to note that from 2012 to 2013 there is a steep increase in youth unemployment, which reached its peak in 2014. In the following years, we can see the beginning of a very gradual decline. All three degrees of urbanisation show the same trend but as described above, cities reach the highest levels of unemployment and see a slower decrease compared to towns and suburbs and rural areas. Rural areas are those that in 2021 return to the same score as in 2011.

Education

Young people by educational attainment level

This paragraph describes the Italian youth population when considering the level of education and the degree of urbanisation. Data from the years 2011, 2015 and 2021 are analysed. To carry out these analyses, young people between 25 and 34 years of age have been taken into consideration.

With regards to cities, in 2011 27% of young people were declared as having a 0-2 level qualification. In 2015 there is a decrease reaching 24.8%. In 2021, this figure continued to fall reaching 23.5% of young people with a 0-2 level of education. Therefore, the overall change between 2011 and 2021 consists of a loss of 3.5%.

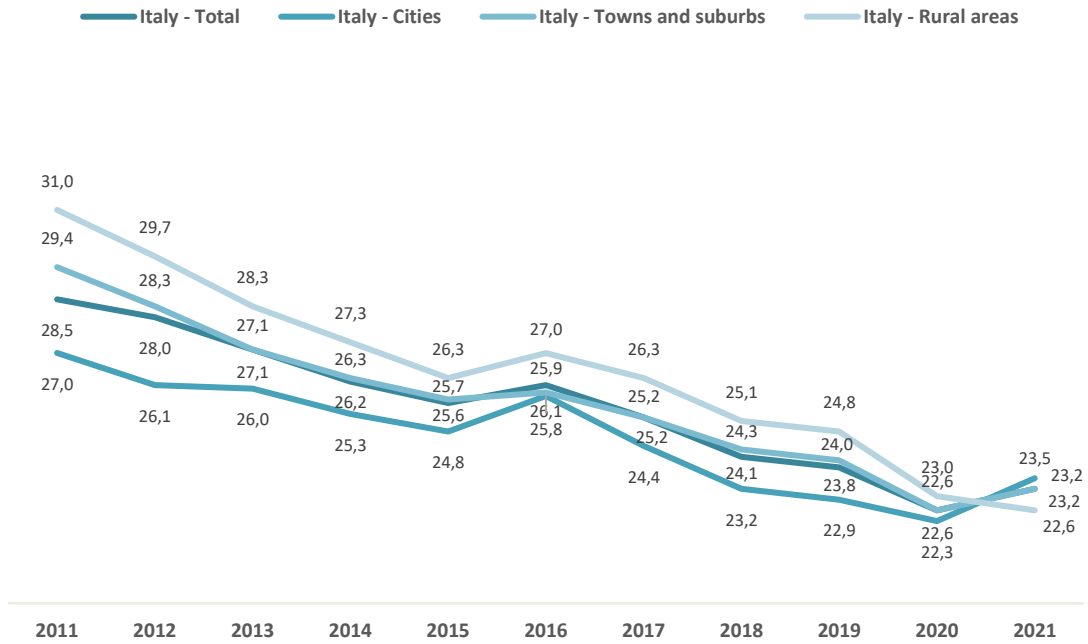
The number of young people with an education level of 3-4 in 2011 in cities is 27%, reducing to 24.8% in 2015 and then increasing again to 23.5% in 2021.

On the other hand, in towns and suburbs, 29.4% of youths between 25 and 34 years of age have a 0-2 level of education in 2011. This rate decreases to 25.7% in 2015 and it decrease again to 23.2% in 2021. Those with a level of education 3-4 are the 51.5% of young population in 2011, rising to 50.7% in 2015 and to 51.4% in 2021. An education level of 5-8 was possessed by 19.2% of youths in 2011. The ratio increases in 2015 (23.6%) and reaches the 25.4% in 2021.

The situation in rural areas is: 31.00% of young people claim to have a 0-2 level of education in 2011. The number tends to decrease in the following years, reaching 26.3% in 2015, and finally 22.6% in 2021. Regarding the level of education 3-4, 52.8% of young people had it in 2011, reaching 52.4% in 2015 and finally 54.2% in 2021. Only 16.2% claimed to have an education level of 5-8 in 2011, this rate increases in 2015 (21.3%) and in 2021 reaching 23.2%.

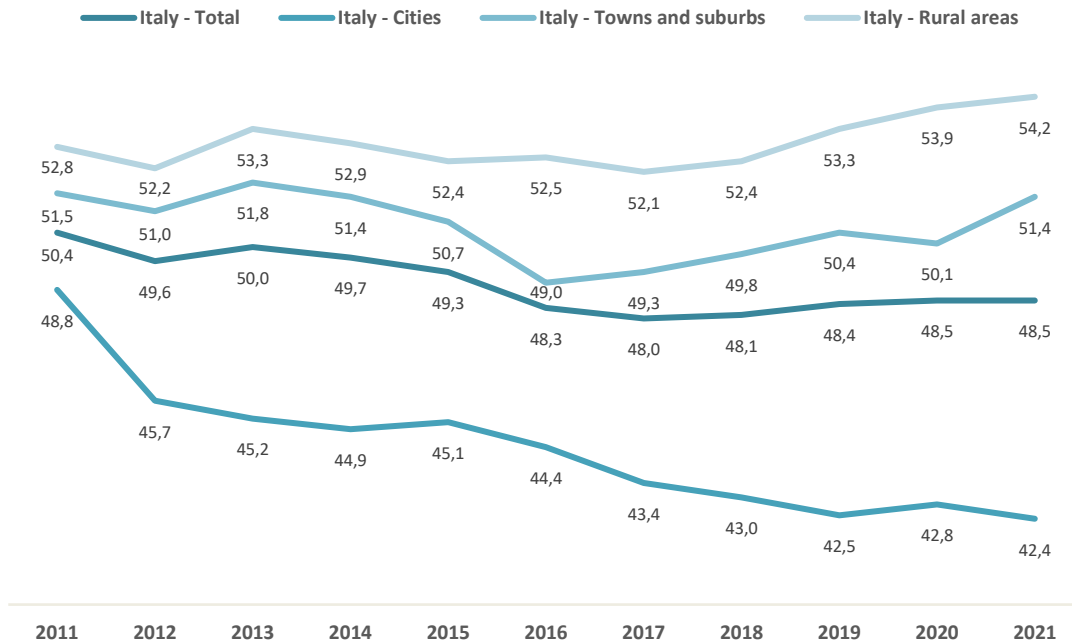
The charts below show the trend in the education levels of young Italians from 2011 to 2021. In general, it can be said that the percentages concerning the 0-2 education level tends to decrease. Conversely, concerning education levels 5-8, it seems to increase with the passing of the years, while those with levels 3-4, remain rather constant. The situation does not seem to change much if different levels of urbanisation are taken into account.

Chart 5-Population (25-34 Years), 2011-2021, by ISCED level 0-2 and degree of urbanization (%)



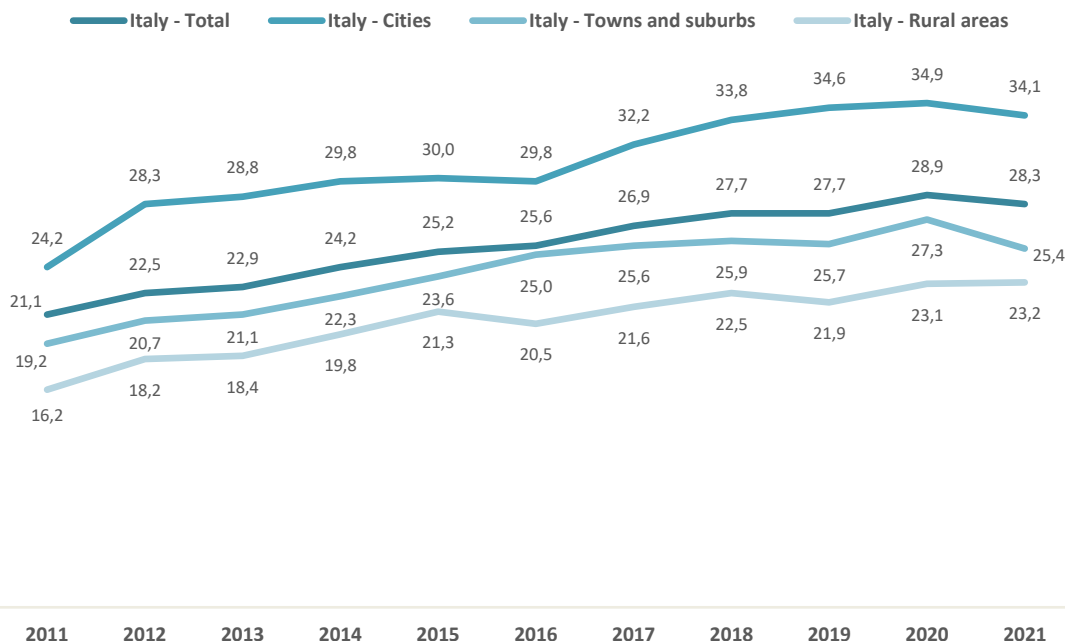
Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_9913) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

Chart 6-Population (25-34 Years), by ISCED level 3-4 and degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_9913) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

Chart 7-Population (25-34 Years), by ISCED level 5-8 and degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_9913) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

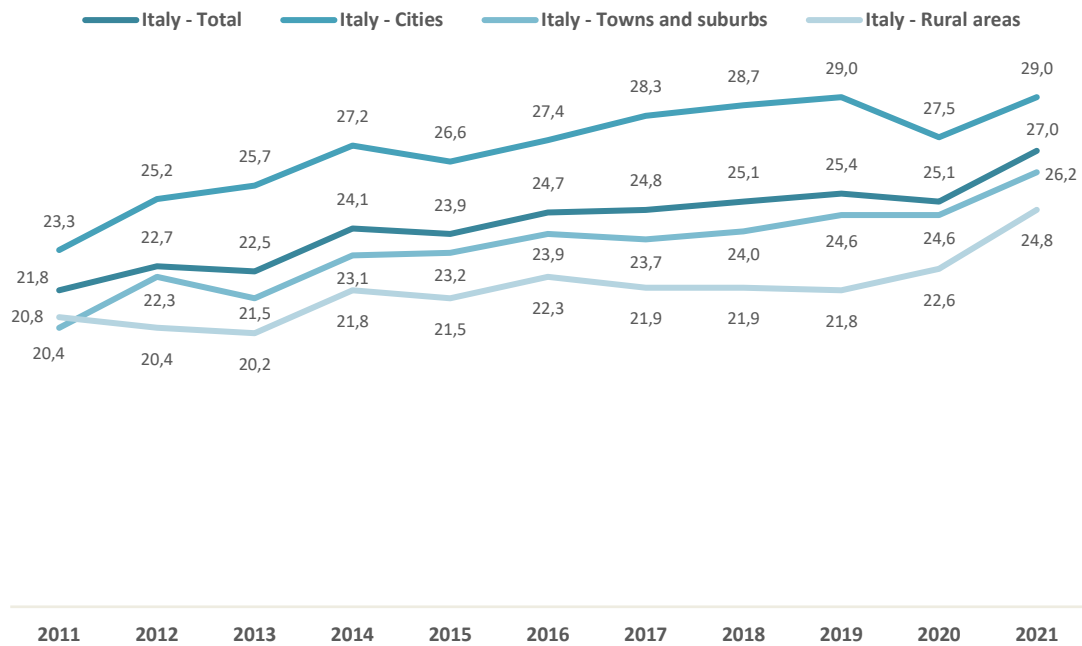
Participation in education and training

As regards the participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) age group 20-34 years old, in 2011 the total rate was 21.8%, which increased in 2014 reached 27.2% and in 2021 (29.0%).

Youth in cities are the ones with the highest rates: in 2011 23.3%, 27.2% in 2014 and 29.0% in 2021. Followed by youth in towns and suburbs: 20.4% in 2011, 23.1% in 2014 and 26.2% in 2021. Youth in rural areas are the ones with the lowest rates: 20.8% in 2011, 21.8% in 2014 and 24.8% in 2021.

Chart 8 shows the rates for age group 20-34 by degree of urbanization.

Chart 8-Participation rate in education and training (last 4 weeks) age group 20-34 years old, 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (trng_lfs_14) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

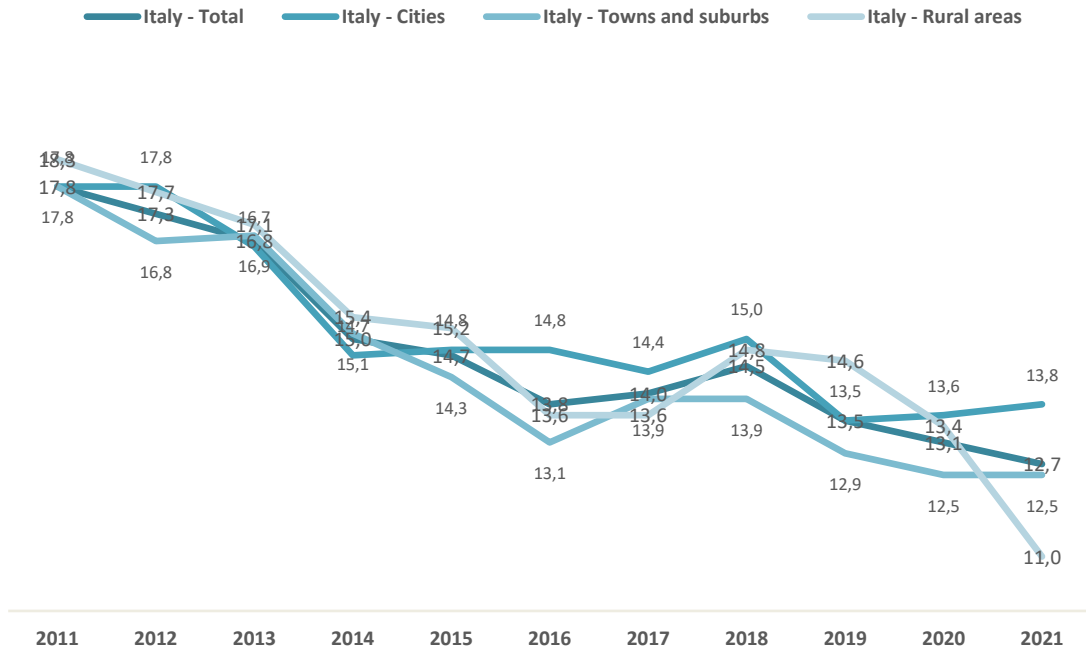
Early school leavers

In the following paragraph, the levels of school drop-out of young Italians between 18 and 24 years old are analysed, comparing related different degrees of urbanisation. Considering the context of cities, those who dropped out of school early total 17.8% of young Italians in 2011, 14.7% in 2014 and 13.8% in 2021. As Chart 9 shows, from 2011 to 2021 there was a total loss of 4%. The situation is similar for the towns and suburbs, where 17.8% of young people dropped out of school in 2011, falling to 15.0% in 2014 and further to 12.5% in 2021, with an overall decrease of 5.30%. In rural areas the rate was 18.3% in 2011, decreasing to 15.4% in 2014 and finally reaching 11% in 2021.

In conclusion, it can be said that the numbers of early school leavers seems to be slightly higher in rural areas than in cities and towns and suburbs, yet data between the three degrees of urbanisation seems to converge over time.

The chart below shows the trend in school drop-out rates by degree of urbanisation from 2011 to 2021, taking into account young Italians aged 18 to 24. In general, it can be said that the trend has a decreasing tendency. The differences between degrees of urbanisation do not seem to have particularly different trends.

Chart 9-ESLET, 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_30) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

NEETs

NEET rate:

This paragraph aims to analyse the percentages of NEETs within the Italian youth population, considering the differences in degree of urbanisation levels. The years considered for these analyses are as follows: 2011, 2014 and 2021.

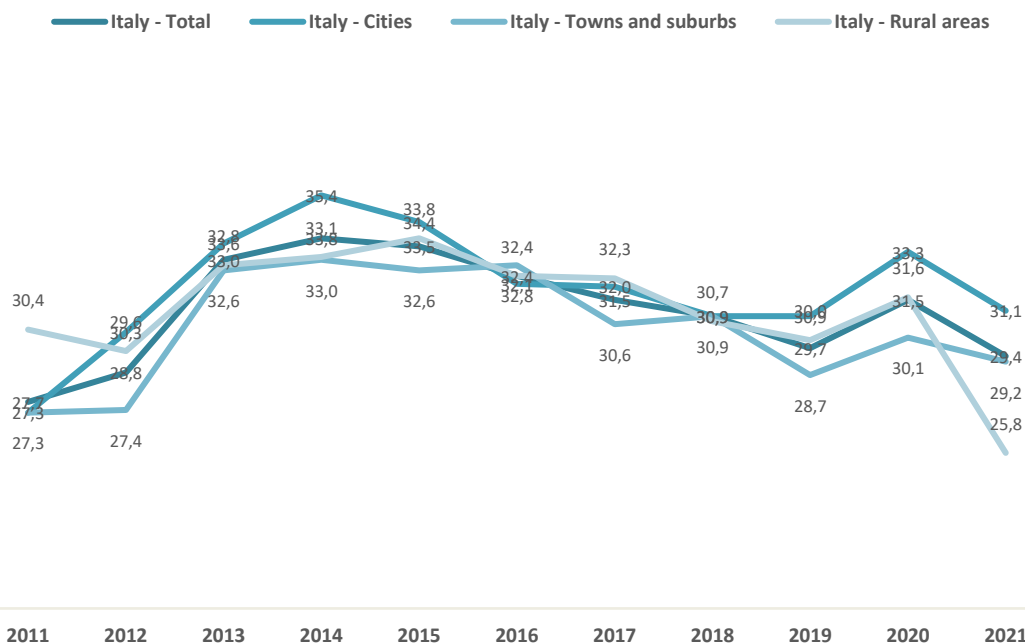
In 2011, the percentage of NEETs is higher in rural areas (30.4%), followed by cities and towns and suburbs (27.3%).

In 2014 the highest percentage of NEETs is found in cities (35.4%), followed by rural areas (33.1%) and towns and suburbs (33%).

2021 also presents the highest value in cities (31.1%), followed by towns and suburbs (29.1%) and rural areas (25.8%).

Overall, as exemplified in Chart 9, there has been an increase in NEET percentages between 2011 and 2014. Conversely, from 2014 to 2021, there has been a 7.2% decrease in rural areas, only 4.3% in cities, and less than 4% in towns and suburbs (relative change). In any case, the NEETs rate between 2011 and 2021 remains rather unchanged.

Chart 10-NEETs rate (25-29 Years), 2011-2021, by degree of urbanization (%)



Source: Eurostat (edat_ifse_29) – data extracted in 08.05.2022

The chart below represents the percentages of NEETs relative to the different degrees of urbanisation from 2011 to 2021. In general, there has been an increase in NEETs

percentages since 2011, culminating for cities in 2014 and in 2015 for towns and suburbs and rural areas. Following this peak, values start to decrease, although more slowly than they had increased from 2011 onwards with a further peak in 2020 probably as a consequence of pandemic restrictions.

Conclusions

Youth population | The Italian population has slightly decreased from 2011 to 2021. Beyond the number of inhabitants, Italy, like many Western countries with developed economies, is going through a process of "dejuvenation" (Catabiano & Rosina, 2018), i.e., an aging population due to a low birth rate. However, a notable point emerging from this data is the drastic decrease in the population living in the cities, with a corresponding increase of the population living in rural areas. From this it can be inferred that the economic crisis has also greatly affected the mobility of young Italians, who have been forced to stay/go back to their regions of origin due to the scarcity of opportunities and the high cost of cities.

Youth unemployment | Youth unemployment in Italy has risen dramatically since 2011, reaching a peak of 26% in 2014 and which then decreased until 2021. The trend has been linear with regards to rural areas and towns and suburbs. A separate discussion must be made for the cities, where the rates of de-occupation remained quite high, even in 2021 (20%). This data confirms what was previously expressed concerning the period of difficulty experienced by cities.

Educational attainment | Between 2011 and 2021, the Italian population aged 15 to 24 years old has become more educated. The number of those with an education equivalent to ISCED-2 has decreased, while those with an education equivalent to ISCED 3-4 and ISCED 5-8 has increased.

NEETs | Italy has been strongly affected by the economic crisis. The NEET rate is one of the highest in the EU and it increased overall from 2011 to 2021. The highest growth was seen between 2011 and 2014 but then decreased slightly until 2019 and grows again in 2020, probably as a result of the pandemic. Concerning degrees of urbanisation, the highest rate is found in cities. It is important to underline one thing about NEETs in the Italian context. There are big differences in different national geographical areas. Southern regions have much higher NEET rates than the historically more industrialised northern regions (ISTAT, 2020).

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Important links

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