

HEIDI PAABORT

Equisupport model for public sector
policymaking with young people
in education and employment transitions



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Supervisors: Mai Beilmann, Associate Professor of Empirical Sociology,
University of Tartu, Estonia

Dagmar Narusson, Research Fellow in Social Innovation,
Lecturer in Community Work, University of Tartu, Estonia

Opponent: Francisco Simões, Assistant Researcher, Iscte – University
Institute of Lisbon, Portugal

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LIST OF ORIGINAL PUBLICATIONS

This dissertation is based on original publications that will be referred to in the dissertation by their respective Roman numerals.

- Study I** Paabort, H., Beilmann, M. (2021). State level agreed-upon factors contributing more effective policymaking for public sector services for effective local-level work with NEETs. *Revista Calitatea Vieții*, 32(4), 398–420. <https://doi.org/10.46841/RCV.2025.03.01>
- Study II** Erdogan, E., Flynn, P., Nasya, B., Paabort, H., Lendzhova, V. (2021). NEET rural–urban ecosystems: The role of urban social innovation diffusion in supporting sustainable rural pathways to education, employment, and training. *SUSTAINABILITY*, 13(21). <https://doi.org/10.3390/su132112053>
- Study III** Paabort, H., Flynn, P., Beilmann, M., Petrescu, C. (2023). Policy responses to real world challenges associated with NEET youth: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Sustainable Cities*, 5. <https://doi.org/10.3389/frsc.2023.1154464>
- Study IV** Erdoğan, E., Paabort, H. (2024). A more youth-centered policy development perspective in NEET policies. In: F. Simões & E. Erdoğan (Eds.), *NEETs in European Rural Areas* (pp. 89–113). Springer-Briefs in Sociology: Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45679-4_6
- Study V** Paabort, H., Beilmann, M. (2025). The policy and service creation – necessary shifts for working with NEETs from the perspective of young people and professionals. *Calitatea Vieții*, 36(3), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.46841/RCV.2025.03.01>

Author's Contribution

The author of this doctoral thesis made a significant contribution to the following studies:

- Study I:** The author led the implementation of the study and contributed to the development of the research concept and methodology of the study. The author also organised and secured the necessary database, conducted the initial analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and prepared the figures.
- Study II:** The author contributed to the development of the theoretical framework of the article and the selection of the analytical methodology. In addition, she assisted in identifying the materials to be analysed, conducted the analysis, presented the results and prepared figures of the results.

- Study III:** The author led the implementation process of the study. She contributed to the development of the research concept and methodology of the study. She organised and secured the database required for the analysis, conducted the initial analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and prepared the figures.
- Study IV:** The author shared equal responsibility with the co-author at every stage. Furthermore, the author was fully responsible for the presentation and analysis of the Estonian case, as well as for preparing the corresponding figures.
- Study V:** The author led the study. She contributed to the development of the research concept and methodology. She organised and secured the database required for the analysis, conducted the initial analysis, wrote the first draft of the manuscript and prepared the figures.

Related publications

- Paabort, H.**, Beilmann, M. (2025). Poliitikakujundamise nihked NEET-olukorras noortega töötamiseks: noorte ja spetsialistide vaatenurk. *Riigikogu Toimetised*, 52, 93–104.
- Taurelli, S., **Paabort, H.**, Themel, M., Petkovic, S. (2025). *Governance practices for Youth Guarantee*. The case of Estonia. European Training Foundation. <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/document-attachments/governance-practices-youth-guarantee-case-estonia>
- Beilmann, M., Otsavel, S., Kõiv, K., **Paabort, H.** (2023). NEET-staatuses noored teenuste ja programmide võrgusilmas: kuidas paremini toetada mitteõppivaid ja -töötavaid noori? *Ajakiri Sotsiaaltöö*.
- Flynn, P., **Paabort, H.**, Milenkova, V., Bojkovska, K., Rocca, A., Hačtrjana, L., Lendzhova, V., Nakova, A., de Oliveira Rodrigues, M. (2024). Rural NEETs: Pathways through formal and non-formal education. In: F. Simões & E. Erdoğan (Eds), *NEETs in European Rural Areas*. SpringerBriefs in Sociology. Springer, Cham (pp. 35–49). https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-45679-4_3
- Paabort, H.** (2023). Case study: Estonian Youth Guarantee support system. In: P. Flynn & H. Paabort (Eds.), *Best Practice Interventions in Formal and Non-formal Education of Youth NEETs in Rural Areas Across Europe* (pp. 15–28).
- Paabort, H.**, Kõiv, K. (2022). Youth not in education, employment, or training: Practical reasons and support in Estonia. In: Š. Bojnec & C. Petrescu (Eds.), *Youth Policy Application of the Intervention: Best practices with Rural NEETs* (pp. 137–157). COST Action CA 18213.
- Kõiv, K., Saks, K., **Paabort, H.**, Lendzhova, V., Smoter, M. (2021). A service model for self-directed learning of NEET youth at the local government level. *Youth and Society*, 54, 52–68. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118X211058225>
- Petrescu, C., Erdoğan, E., Flynn, P., Bojnec, Š., Fernandes-Jesus, M., Marta, E., Nasya, B., **Paabort, H.**, Petrescu, C., Pilařová, T. (2020). *Manual for the Classification of Intervention Best Practices with Rural NEETs*.

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Perception must change... We must look at what's hidden in the closet. Fear, aggressiveness, actions influenced by trauma: maybe I'll get another blow today? Someone stings you, and you already explode. We can only see the explosion, but they just want to survive. If we talk about these topics, which may be their [young people in vulnerable life situations] backgrounds, then I believe that society will start changing it. We should reflect the positive sides of the youth.
(Professional working with young people)

INTRODUCTION: THE AIM AND THE CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The focus of my doctoral thesis is on young people who, for various reasons, find themselves in a disadvantaged situation and are therefore not participating in education or employment. I am looking for answers to the question of how we can better respond to the actual expectations and needs of young people so that they can return to education and the labour market. My doctoral thesis is partly based on autoethnographic elements, as I have been professionally involved with youth issues in Estonia and Europe since 1996. Within this role, I have been able to support youth and youth policies in general, create interventions and shape legislation. Knowing the expectations of the European Union and Estonia, and observing the support actions of local governments across Estonia, I had a need to learn even more about the perceived needs of young people in order to further develop existing support systems.

Supporting young people is not limited to the labour market and education, but encompasses a broader ecosystem that intertwines social welfare, youth work, healthcare, community services, and public sector management practices. As the lives of young people are multifaceted, finding solutions to their concerns requires policy coordination, institutional practices, and an understanding of young people's perceived needs. The effectiveness of youth support policies is closely linked to their coordination, flexibility, and value-based approach. At the same time, policymaking has become more multifaceted, as the responsibility of supporting young people is now distributed across not only multiple sectors but also national, regional and local levels (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Williamson, 2002; Furlong, 2006; Tosun, 2017; Mascherini, 2019; Eurofound, 2024).

The young people at the core of this thesis are described in policy discourse using the internationally recognised acronym NEET, referring to young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment or training (Mascherini et al., 2012; United Nations..., 2023). Recent studies indicate that the share of young people globally who are not in education or employment remains high at 20% (11.2% in Europe – Eurostat, 2024) with two-thirds being women (ILO, 2024). EU member states have been given guidelines aimed at strengthening social protection systems (European Commission, 2020, European Commission..., 2025b). These include the short-term objective of reducing the share of young people classified as NEET to 9%. Member States are also encouraged to implement the

Youth Guarantee initiative with financial support from the European Union (European Commission..., 2020) and a similar recommendation has been made to prospective EU accession countries (European Training..., 2025). Seventy-five million young people classified as NEET will have benefited from the Youth Guarantee by 2025 (Youth Guarantee..., 2025). Analyses of the situation in Member States show that not all young people classified as NEET need support, as being outside education or employment may be a conscious decision (Eurofound, 2024), while more vulnerable young people classified as NEET need more intensive, long-term and comprehensive support measures (European Commission, 2020). Youth transitions are commonly conceptualised as shifts from education to employment and from childhood to adulthood (Maguire, 2010; Saloniemi et al., 2020; Stuart, 2020; Bonnard et al., 2020). Contemporary research, however, emphasises that these trajectories are no longer linear (Simmons et al., 2014) or aligned with conventional pathways (Reiter & Schlimbach, 2015; Saloniemi et al., 2020), frequently necessitating support across multiple sectors (Simões & Tosun, 2024; Rocca et al., 2024). Evolving needs and expectations further complicate the provision of support (Petrescu et al., 2024b), while the heterogeneity of young people poses significant challenges for policy formulation (Malo et al., 2023).

While the Youth Guarantee initiative has had a positive impact on young people (Eurofound, 2024), the largely economic-based performance indicators remain too narrow from the perspective of young people classified as NEET, as it risks overlooking the multidimensional nature of this issue (García-Fuentes, 2019). The need for a more proactive and cross-sectoral approach to the Youth Guarantee has also been foreseen by young people themselves (European Youth..., 2025). Therefore, youth-centred support increasingly necessitates structural transformations (Holte et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2019; Amendola, 2021) and to be effective, such support must integrate diverse policy areas, creating linkages that address both immediate challenges and long-term life prospects (Saloniemi et al., 2020; Ellena et al., 2024; Lauri et al., 2025). Consequently, youth policy must be grounded in a comprehensive understanding of young people (Trein & Tosun, 2021; ILO, 2024), which requires not only cross-sectoral collaboration but also cultural and institutional shifts towards a connected ecosystem of support (Saczyńska-Sokół, 2018; Kangro & Lepik, 2025).

From a holistic ecosystem perspective, the role of young people as shapers of services (Agahi et al., 2024) and the role of local institutions and communities (Nugin et al., 2022; Teles & Swianiewicz, 2018; Jonsson et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2024) is increasingly important. Despite numerous reviews and academic studies of national contexts and good practice in the support of young people classified as NEET (e.g., Rahmani et al., 2024), none provide a clear and comprehensive view of a connected ecosystem, clear guidelines on how youth policies should be designed for young people in the context of new governance or, more specifically, what value can be added by one of the key factors of new public governance – the involvement of the target group itself in policymaking. For a policy to be effective, it is vital to understand young people's well-being

and needs from their perspective and involve them in addressing those needs (Poštrak et al., 2020). Empirical studies in this area are scarce in both Europe and in Estonia, making it necessary to fill this gap. Consequently, it is increasingly important to conceptualise the role young people themselves play in shaping policies and practices, understand what works for them and under what conditions, and how to aid both young people and support service providers in this process. This will enable more effective measures, as support will be better in line with the actual needs of young people.

Therefore, the aim of my doctoral thesis is to develop an evidence-based model for public sector policymaking when working with young people who are not in education, employment or training. This should enable the development of policies that are based on the perceived needs of young people, increase their inclusion in society, and support both short- and long-term coping.

My doctoral thesis is based on five original studies and this introductory article. All the studies share the assumption that the characteristics of policies in different fields influence how best to design support programmes and the role of policymakers is to ensure an environment conducive to synergy across affiliated institutions (Matland, 1995; Carsillo and Königs, 2015; Enang et al., 2022). These studies are guided by the view that new public governance should be central to policymaking, as it emphasises social innovation and co-creation in addressing societal challenges (Rogers, 1995; Voorberg et al., 2013; Windsor, 2017; Jonsson et al., 2022; Enang et al., 2022).

In **Study I** we analyse the interaction of policies and institutional frameworks across sectors and levels to understand how they influence the effectiveness of support for young people in NEET situations. In **Study II** we look at the role of social innovation in policymaking, assessing its impact on mechanisms of social change and service design. In **Study III** we concentrate on the main theoretical frameworks related to the nature and support of young people in NEET situations. In **Study IV** we analyse the possible impact of different policymaking approaches that reduce youth vulnerability and increase well-being, and their impact in the long term, and in **Study V** we look at the principles of needs-based youth support, which helps to create more flexible forms of support.

In these studies, we are using a range of data collection and analysis methods, including document analysis and systematic literature reviews, informant and expert interviews, action research and an online survey. This research framework makes it possible to assess not only the effectiveness of policies, but also their social impact and sustainability and develop a new support model for young people in NEET situations based on empirical analysis and the theoretical framework, offering practical guidelines for designing policies that are adapted to young people's perceived needs and life contexts.

In the theoretical part of the introductory article, I present concepts and approaches that facilitate our understanding of the nature of and support for young people in NEET situations, as well as the relevant policy instruments, such

as the Youth Guarantee and the theories applied in the studies. In the methodology section I describe the data collection and analysis processes used in the studies. I also provide an overview of how ethical issues have been considered in relation to young people, as well as my self-reflection and personal connection to the topic. In the self-reflection section, I highlight how the research conducted during my doctoral studies has already made it possible to change current youth policies.

In the results section I present the key findings of the studies, and in the discussion section I provide a more detailed overview of the conclusions. I also present a model for supporting young people and connected terms. The introductory article concludes with summaries and suggestions for future research and policy recommendations in both English and Estonian. The doctoral thesis includes figures I have created myself to help explain and illustrate the concepts and main findings.

The summary in the Estonian is presented in a little more depth. In addition, the terms created and special suggestions based my own experiences for Estonian youth policymakers in the doctoral thesis can be found in Estonian.

An ideal service must not create a situation where a young person comes in and is pushed through an intense programme; they must go through several doors. It has to be attractive, and it has to be real. How does it benefit me?
(Professional working with young people)

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The following section outlines the main theoretical underpinnings that inform the foundations of a comprehensive support framework for young people classified as NEET.

1.1 Concept of term of young people not in education, employment or training

Young people who are not in education, employment or training have been at the centre of European policy debates and decisions as a specific target group in recent decades (Furlong & Cartmel, 1997; Williamson, 2002; Eurofound, 2024).

The acronym NEET is an umbrella term referring to young people aged 15–29 who are not studying, working or involved in training (Mascherini et al., 2012). There is currently no critical debate regarding the age at which young people should be considered NEET, although the age range used in research is not based on theoretical considerations (Petrescu et al., 2024). Conceptually, the term has primarily served as a statistical indicator (Furlong, 2006) harmonised at the EU level in 2010 by the European Commission’s Employment Committee as part of the Europe 2020 strategy. This enables the monitoring of young people classified as NEET and comparisons between Member States. The emergence of the concept was linked to changes in policymaking, which abolished the term ‘status zero’ and introduced NEET as a matter of individual-level concern (Serracant, 2014; Simmons et al., 2014; Holmes et al., 2021). The institutionalisation of young people classified as NEET as an analytical category may have proven problematic, as it may not clearly identify specific vulnerable subgroups, leading to inefficient one-size-fits-all policy interventions.

Various frameworks are used to categorise young people who are not in education or employment. For example, this group is divided into two: active and inactive. The active group refers to people looking for employment, and the inactive group to those not looking for employment (Holmes et al., 2021). Some in this group are also seen as having this status voluntarily and are referred to as *false NEET* (Eurofound, 2012; Goldring, 2015), and some would not otherwise receive services if they were not categorised as NEET (Youth Guarantee Support..., 2023). In addition, young people classified as NEET are clustered in the European Union. The first cluster mainly includes Nordic countries with low NEET rates, where young people transition from school to work quickly and smoothly. The second cluster primarily comprises countries in the Mediterranean

region, where economic recession and the resulting structural issues have made it difficult for young people to access the labour market. The third cluster mainly encompasses Eastern European countries (including Estonia), where the gender dimension and family responsibilities often influence entering the labour market (Eurofound, 2016).

As a guide for policymaking in the European Union, the NEET concept has a separate typology, which classifies youngsters into seven subcategories primarily based on employment status (Eurofound, 2012; Mascherini, 2019). This typology is intended to enable Member States to make more targeted and heterogeneous policies (Mascherini, 2019), as broad-based policy measures may not meet the needs of many young people (Maguire, 2018; Bonnard et al., 2020; Eurofound 2024). The categories include: (1) short-term unemployed and jobseekers; (2) long-term unemployed; (3) young people who are responsible for their families; (4) young people who believe they will not find employment and are at high risk of social exclusion and long-term unemployment; (5) young people who are most privileged and those who have found alternative ways of living, such as creative careers; (6) young people who have already engaged in services and will soon leave NEET status; and (7) young people who are not looking for work due to illness or special needs and need specialised support (Mascherini, 2019).

However, it has been found that it is not effective to base policy design and communication of support solely on the NEET concept, as many young people are in precarious and vulnerable situations in employment; for example, due to a low level of education, and because they may not identify themselves solely through employment status categories (Furlong, 2006; Parola & Felaco, 2020). Differences in vulnerability at the individual level may manifest, for example, in terms of gender, age, family background, education and unemployment experiences, socioeconomic status, and health and well-being (Petrescu et al., 2024; Rahmani et al., 2024; Simões, 2024). Consequently, basing policymaking solely on the NEET concept, which fails to reflect the heterogeneous nature of situations, hinders the development of effective social policies for young people (Furlong, 2006; Cabasés Piqué et al., 2016; García-Fuentes, 2019). Furthermore, a large number of young people are at risk of missing out on the labour market and other support measures (Maguire, 2015) because they may not receive the necessary information about opportunities.

Moreover, the NEET concept, the associated data systems and the core values used for creating them have been found to entail a number of risks, as they can automatically normalise new stigmatising beliefs about young people (Thornham & Gómez Cruz, 2016), which in turn can worsen the situation for young people who may begin to conceal their real problems to avoid being labelled (Holte, 2018; Maguire, 2018; Bonnard et al., 2020).

1.2 The main theoretical concepts to the nature and needs of young people in NEET situations

Next, I present the main theoretical concepts describing the nature of the young people in NEET situations and the support provided to them. The third study of the doctoral thesis (**Study III**) showed that young people in NEET situations have mainly been described through vulnerability (e.g., Selenko & Pils, 2019), social exclusion (e.g., Hignett et al., 2018; Russell, 2016), well-being (e.g., Bonanomi & Luppi, 2020), social capital (e.g., Miller et al., 2015), and transition concepts (Jongboed & Giret, 2021). In the Estonian context, the most highlighted concepts in political discourse have been vulnerability, well-being, social exclusion and social inclusion. Also, I will give short overview about Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model, as interactions between well-being, vulnerability, social inclusion and exclusion has been analysed recent years, through this model.

1.2.1 Well-being of young people in NEET situations

From the perspective of this doctoral thesis, well-being can be considered a general framework that enables an understanding of the overall quality of life of an individual or society. Research has shown that in countries where the everyday well-being of young people is ensured, the proportion of young people in NEET situations tends to be lower (Jonsson & Goicolea, 2020; Jongbloed & Giret, 2021; Broka & Toots, 2022).

Through the concept of well-being, it is possible to assess different dimensions of an individual as a whole: their mental, physical, and social condition. These are connected to multiple dimensions that are important, valuable, and meaningful to the person. In the context of well-being, aspects such as deprivation, happiness, resilience, safety, relationships, and inclusion have been highlighted (e.g., Camfield & Skevington, 2008; Soutter et al., 2013; Mullin, 2014; Andresen, 2014).

Well-being can be divided into objective (e.g., access to housing, education and food) and subjective components (e.g., sense of belonging, participation in society and experiences in education or the labour market) (Diener & Suh, 1997; Diener 2000). Therefore, aspects related to well-being are often used to assess an individual's need for support. In Estonia, this approach is applied to both children and adults (Laste Heaolu..., 2023; Täisealise inimese..., 2025), and these assessments are also applied in the case of young people classified as NEET (Youth Guarantee Support..., 2025). Therefore, approaches to ensure objective or subjective well-being may differ between countries (Broka & Toots, 2021; Eurofound, 2016). These policy choices influence the structure of national support systems and the logic behind the measures provided to young people in NEET situations to ensure their well-being. They also profile where young people are directed through the available support.

From a well-being perspective, this presents a certain contradiction in political and academic debates. Political discussions have shown that support for young

people is mainly concentrated on objective well-being and economic survival, and is primarily associated with entering or being part of the labour market. Education policy primarily aims to prepare young people for work, and life and employment policies are directed toward enhancing their competitiveness and employability (European Commission, 2020, 2021), as employment provides the means to meet basic material needs essential for living. Young people in NEET situations are described through labour market statistics, where their absence from the workforce is also framed as a lost source of tax revenue (Mascherini et al., 2014), thereby negatively affecting macroeconomic indicators. A quality education, as well as employment, are important factors in ensuring well-being, but supporting young people classified as NEET cannot be seen as solely about increasing material resources to improve well-being.

The academic literature also emphasises the need to adopt a holistic approach to addressing and providing support to this group (Hudson et al., 2019; Pesquera Alonso et al., 2022), focusing on the everyday lives and well-being of young people before moving into employment (Rikala, 2020; Jonsson & Goicolea, 2020). In addition, there is a need for young people classified as NEET to feel seen, heard and understood, and to be respected through support that is appropriate and necessary (Gustavsson & Jonsson, 2024). Studies have shown that effective support depends on whether the assessments and choices related to well-being are based primarily on the individual's own perceived evaluation or on societally agreed-upon assessment norms and criteria. In determining support needs, achieving a balance is considered important, where both the individual's subjective sense of well-being and self-fulfilment, and societal agreements and expectations, are equally important. When such assessments are based on shared evaluations, there is a higher likelihood that an individual's well-being can be improved by changing their circumstances (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2022; Schweiger, 2019; Dumouilla et al., 2021).

From the perspective of young people classified as NEET, it has been seen that rather than helping and supporting young people, it is more important to empower and enable them to realise that they are responsible for their own well-being (Miller et al., 2015; Simmons, 2017; Avila & Rose, 2019; Poštrak et al., 2020; Taru, 2024).

1.2.2 Vulnerability of young people in NEET situations

The concept of vulnerability has been used in various disciplines and contexts internationally (Vinson, 2009; Fawcett, 2009; Virokannas et al., 2018). It is a phenomenon that all people can experience (Herring, 2016). A common view is that vulnerability is the degradation of the ecosystem around a person due to factors that are harmful to the person, and that a particular social group may be more vulnerable than another and may find themselves in this situation repeatedly (Zimmerman, 2017; Virokannas et al., 2018).

In the case of the young people, who are at the centre of this doctoral thesis, several studies confirm that young people not in education, employment, or

training (NEET) are at greater risk of being exposed to harmful influences (Salvà-Mut et al., 2016; Bălan, 2016; Andersson et al., 2018; Rahmani & Groot, 2023) and of repeatedly experiencing vulnerability (Rahmani et al., 2024). Factors found to exacerbate the negative impact include the duration of time spent in NEET status, repetition of the status, and early entry into it (Bălan, 2016). Multiple experiences of NEET status have been found to be associated with, for example, delayed income, which is also lower than others (Andersson et al., 2018), as well as self-perceived health (Hammarström & Ahlgren, 2019, Stea et al., 2019) and environmental awareness choices (Bonanomi & Luppi, 2020). Therefore, young people in NEET situations as individuals are mainly described as needing assistance and requiring specialised services to overcome their vulnerability. In this doctoral thesis, I take the position that vulnerability is first and foremost a complex phenomenon.

Vulnerability emerges mainly at the individual level; it can be innate (Brown, 2017), relational and subjective (Fawcett, 2009; Kutsar et al., 2024), and the effectiveness of supporting an individual depends on the individual's past experience, current needs, immediate network and the resources available in the living environment. Therefore, as vulnerability is linked to the social background of young people classified as NEET and the broader circumstances of their everyday environment, support for them needs to be considered in terms of whether the environment around them is supportive or restrictive. It should therefore be considered that an individual's vulnerability may also be influenced by the regional or community aspect of his or her residence (different opportunities in urban and rural areas). This has also been confirmed in the case of young people classified as NEET (e.g., Sadler, 2015; Melas, 2023; Simões, 2024). Vulnerability may also be aggravated by structural factors, such as the Covid-19 outbreak in 2020 (Eurofound, 2021).

From the perspective of policymaking for young people classified as NEET, vulnerability has been seen primarily as a social construct, whereby specific policy instruments (e.g., guarantees for children¹ and youth²), programmes, and support measures are created for them as a vulnerable group, and they are described as persons in need of specific services to overcome their vulnerability. However, given the temporal and situational (temporary or permanent) nature of vulnerability when supporting young people, and focusing first on the life situations that create vulnerability and the role of support in reducing and/or (re)creating vulnerability (Dumouilla et al., 2021; Virokannas et al., 2018), it is possible either to support a person's exit from the situation or their coping with the situation (Schweiger, 2019).

¹ Created in 2021, <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021H1004>

² Created 2013, https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=oj:JOC_2013_120_R_0001_01

1.2.3 Social exclusion and social inclusion of young people in NEET situations

Social exclusion and social inclusion are multifaceted concepts (Cedeño, 2023). In particular, exclusion is seen as the result of the accumulation of inequalities and the deprivation of different opportunities for individuals, both in their life course and in different aspects of society (Reiska, 2018a; Reiska, 2018b; Marta, 2022), and can therefore lead to the isolation or exclusion of an individual or group from social life (Thompson, 2011; Ferreira et al., 2024). For young people in NEET situations, this can mean being deprived of multiple opportunities and services simultaneously (Helemäe, 2018). Studies have shown that finding oneself in a NEET situation, or the problems of being in this situation, cannot be reduced to a passing phase; rather, it can be a predictor of social exclusion and less favourable career prospects, and therefore either prevention or support to get out of this situation is needed (Bäckman & Nilsson, 2016).

However, non-participation in society generally (education, labour market, leisure activities, civil society) or social life is seen as a problem because being in a certain vulnerable situation (risk factor) has consequences for the individual, which deprives groups in the same situation of opportunities. This is also confirmed by research, which shows that one-size-fits-all protective factors cannot be assumed to have a consistent impact and offer a solution for young people in similar risk situations (Bacher et al., 2017; Simões et al., 2022) and that there is a particular need to understand the reasons for each individual's situation and the possible resources for managing the situation (Görlich & Katznelson, 2018).

In the context of young people classified as NEET, the debate surrounding social exclusion focuses on the risks resulting from structural (globalisation), institutional (e.g., legislation, policies, sectoral structures) and social factors (e.g., societal attitudes). In society at large, there is often a condemnatory approach and consequent stigmatisation of young people classified as NEET (Bonnard et al., 2020). These contradictions or poor linkages may result in a situation where the consequences or risks cannot be adequately mitigated (García-Fuentes, 2019; Holte et al., 2019; Amendola, 2021; Lauri et al., 2025). In addition to structural causes, opportunities for young people classified as NEET to participate in social processes are influenced by family or personal factors, such as the economic situation (Quintano et al., 2018; Kalalahti et al., 2025), parents' education level, daily living situation and attitudes to receiving help (Reiter & Schlimbach, 2015; Parola, 2020).

Similar to vulnerability, social exclusion is seen as a temporary situation that is amplified over a period of time, such as the transition from school to work, from child to adult (Saloniemi et al., 2020; Bonnard et al., 2020), and the extent to which this is resolved tends to be relational and context-specific (Cedeño, 2023). For example, institutional patterns have been observed in several EU Member States for women, who are more often excluded from the labour market due to family care responsibilities (Russell, 2016; Haikkola, 2021).

At the same time, unequal power relations in the family (e.g., poor relations within the family), community or institutions due to the age or status of young people (Selenko and Pils, 2019; Berlin et al., 2020) can reduce the young person's potential agency and also exacerbate social exclusion (Gaspani, 2019; Enrica, 2019). In the case of agency, individuals are capable of making sense of the environment around them (Giddens, 1984), but being unable to apply that agency reduces the choices available them.

Social inclusion, by contrast, is a supportive and empowering concept for young people, which can help reduce social exclusion (inequality, deprivation) by minimising the deprivation of young people in NEET situations in unequal positions through certain activities (Filia et al., 2018). In Europe, this is regarded as one of the primary approaches to supporting young people, including young people in NEET situations (Goldring, 2015). It has been found that, with the support of policies and institutional solutions, the self-efficacy and social position of an individual can be improved (Europe..., 2019). Therefore, social inclusion can also be seen as a phenomenon where policymaking processes can be more consciously involved in the service ecosystem for young people, resulting in better knowledge of young people classified as NEET in terms of perceptions, behaviours and deprivations (gaps in their support), in order to build on this knowledge to create more flexible and accessible forms of support. Taking inclusive principles into account will also help prevent marginalisation and social isolation (OECD Employment Outlook 2011; Holte, 2018), as this can help avoid young people classified as NEET from becoming excluded from public life, the community and society at large, which in turn support their access to information, support, education, and the labour market.

1.2.4 The main conceptual connections of young people in NEET situations using the socio-ecological model

In recent years, interactions between well-being, vulnerability, social inclusion and exclusion and the influence of the surrounding ecosystem for young people classified as NEET have been analysed through Bronfenbrenner's socio-ecological model (e.g., Ferreira et al., 2024; Flynn et al., 2024; Petrescu et al., 2024).

The socio-ecological model highlights that individual development is the result of interactions between different levels of the ecosystem around the individual and includes variables such as the individual's internal resources, relationships with others, institutional, cultural and political frameworks, and time (Bronfenbrenner, 1977; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The socio-ecological model itself is composed of five spheres, whose mutual interaction allows the description of both supportive and vulnerability-enhancing, restorative or reductive mechanisms for young people classified as NEET. The microsystem is composed of the individual's immediate everyday environment and immediate surroundings (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), which makes it possible to describe vulnerability indicators related to their nativity and region (Flynn et al., 2023). For example, the educational background of parents, or their labour market

attachment or attitudes, affect the daily well-being opportunities of a young person.

The mesosystem includes interactions between different microsystems, such as connections between a person's home environment and the institutions they interact with. Factors like the young person's own agency in choosing support institutions (Saloniemi et al., 2020; Schoon & Lyons-Amos, 2017), or restrictive institutional practices and limitations (Rikala, 2019), have been found to influence vulnerability and social exclusion, as these may lead to disengagement or withdrawal from trying altogether.

The exosystem comprises broader social networks that may influence the individual either directly or indirectly, such as a parent's position in society and the associated access to opportunities (Kavelson et al., 2020). The macrosystem encompasses societal and cultural values and norms that shape the individual's environment and can either limit or support their development. For example, societal attitudes and the stigmatisation of young people classified as NEET (Maguire, 2018; Bonnard et al., 2020), broader structural changes (Hoste et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2019; Amendola, 2021), such as access to the labour market shaped by labour demand, may exacerbate or reproduce vulnerability. Access itself depends on the alignment of national policies, as well as education and labour market strategies (Nielsen et al., 2017; Scandurra et al., 2020; Simões, 2024; Lauri et al., 2025). Finally, the chronosystem incorporates the historical and temporal context in which an individual lives and which affects their decisions – such as wider processes of globalisation and neoliberalism (Holte et al., 2019).

1.3 Different approaches to policymaking for young people in NEET situations

In this chapter, I provide an overview of the theoretical framework that describes the service development and policymaking approaches used in the thesis as a phenomenon that can identify key enabling or constraining factors within the operational environment of youth interventions. The general starting point of this thesis is the assumption that the characteristics of policies in different fields influence how best to design programmes (Matland, 1995). Among other things, the structural capacities (O'Reilly et al., 2018) or constraints within the sphere of responsibility of the actors involved in any participatory process also play a pivotal role in youth support, such as the readiness of public authorities to develop and finance processes, the organisational structure and the resulting involvement, as well as legal conditions (Carsillo & Königs, 2015; see also **Studies II and IV**).

1.3.1 Rational policymaking

The doctoral study showed that policymaking for young people in NEET situations relies primarily on a rational approach. This approach is based on scientific

and expert knowledge combined with various analytical techniques (e.g., a cost-benefit efficiency analysis from a service perspective), as it is assumed that one of the main objectives of policymakers is to choose one efficient solution among several options to societal problems (Radin, 2019). Rational perspective analysis allows for this because it is based on political, technical and economic feasibility (Meltsner, 1972; Dunn, 2017; Cairney, 2021). However, efficiency in such policymaking is primarily an economic criterion; that is, a metric set by the state, which has only later incorporated the dimensions of adequacy, fairness, responsiveness and relevance (Dunn, 2017). The identification of problems by policymakers is therefore contextual, and the choice of solution tends to be driven by economic considerations, namely cost-effectiveness (Baumgartner & Jones, 2010).

Based by Cairney (2021), problems addressed by policy are mainly constructed by society. These become ‘social’ problems once they attract public attention and there is enough political will. Hence, a certain competition between ‘problems’ arises in policymaking (Goode & Ben-Yehuda, 1994; Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988), and how policymakers interpret these problems leads to the construction of policy measures (Eichhorst et al., 2017).

The acronym *NEET* at the core of this thesis is also grounded in economic and employment status. In European employment strategies, young people classified as NEET are referred to as a group of non-working young people for whom measures need to be developed in the context of human capital (Serracant, 2014). The subsequent performance indicators tend to refer to economic metrics (European Commission, 2017; European Commission..., 2025a). Developing more effective policymaking models requires understanding and engaging a range of stakeholders working with young people in NEET situations to understand the real nature of the problem, but mapping the policy and support ecosystem can be challenging as each social problem has a different context (Agahi et al., 2024).

1.3.2 People-centred and combined policymaking

Various governance approaches can be used to manage the policy problem-solving process and identify and involve stakeholders. This thesis primarily followed three concepts of policymaking: top-down (Study I), bottom-up (Studies **II and IV**), and combined approaches (**Studies II, III, IV and V**).

The top-down concept positions national policymakers as the central actors whose leadership results in the development of general policy guidelines. The bottom-up concept views policymaking as occurring at the local level where the service is provided. A combined approach has been seen as a way to capitalise on the strengths of both approaches (Suggett, 2011). The first concept is considered to place excessive emphasis on predetermined legal language, results and top-down guidelines (Matland, 1995). The concern of the second concept from the point of view of the state is the autonomy of service providers, which the state cannot direct in terms of the extent, efficiency and quality of services (Hjern & Porter, 1981; Fung & Wraith, 2003). In addition, it is more time-consuming and resource-intensive. It may therefore be difficult for the state to formulate a

national policy. But according to Lipsky (1980), Butkeviciene (2009), and Gilchrist (2019), bottom-up approaches are more effective than top-down initiatives because they consider the local context and involve local stakeholders. The potential for community resources to reach and support people is also increasingly discussed in the scientific literature (e.g., Gilchrist, 2019; Russel, 2021; Jonsson et al., 2022; Kangro & Lepik, 2023; Narusson & Kass, 2025), as communities are seen as sources of resources; acknowledging them more consciously can create necessary, more appropriate and sustainable solutions (Russel, 2021; Ferreira et al., 2024).

Several other factors influence the choice and implementation of policy-making management approaches. For example, it has been found that the governance approach, including partnerships within the ecosystem, depends on the work culture (Lencioni, 2002), and either facilitates or hinders the identification of shared problems, the setting of objectives and potentially the creation of cross-sectoral teams. According to Jones and George (2017), such teams should be characterised by a shared goal, clearly defined roles, interdependence, trust and coordination. For example, a lack of trust is one of the main obstacles to effective teamwork as it fosters fear of conflict, which may result in the withholding of honest thoughts (Shave, 2016). This results in a lack of commitment, a lack of accountability and thus an inability to pursue a common clear goal (Ibid.). However, according to Groddeck (2011), building trust motivates teams to make a collective effort and be more loyal, allowing them to achieve goals through a cross-disciplinary and cross-functional approach, including a service design that is no longer hierarchical but needs-based, where shared agreements replace current lines of command. New joint agreements foster a better sense of ownership of future objectives (Lee & Raschke, 2016) and contribute to the redefinition of values (Jones & George, 2017; Lencioni, 2002). Bourne and Jenkins (2013) and Groddeck (2011) have highlighted that shared values influence various stakeholders and reduce misunderstandings between employees and institutions regarding the future direction of the institution. A lack of information flow about one another's activities and common cross-sectoral competencies can lead to cooperation facing institutional barriers, resulting in young people not being reached or not receiving support (Kolouh-Soderlund, 2013).

1.3.3 New public governance and social innovation

The increasingly prevalent concept of new public governance (Brandsen et al., 2017) in the public sector shifts focus from public goods to generating societal value through networks of discussion and provision and cooperative activities, where each person is a co-creator of public services (Moore, 1995; Hartley et al., 2017; Torfing et al., 2019; Torfing et al., 2021). Creating societal value requires the ability to manage long-term relationships, with broad stakeholder engagement, open mindsets and an adaptable and mutual learning approach at the core (Osborne, 2016). Successful social innovation requires participants from diverse social systems (Rogers, 1995), as this helps develop a more appropriate solution.

Furthermore, a collective approach (Sørensen & Torfing, 2022) and the empowerment of stakeholders (Hartley et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2021; Aflaki et al., 2023) are seen to create new value in public sector services.

Social innovation, which is the focus of this doctoral thesis, is one way to implement public sector innovation, and its aim is to improve people's well-being, encourage the evolution of relationships and create a better balance for coexistence as a society. Although social innovation does not have a universally accepted definition internationally (Powering European Public..., 2013; OECD, 2019), it includes similar activities or approaches across countries, such as social entrepreneurship, citizen- and community-led initiatives, collaborative governance, and technology-based solutions to societal problems (OECD, 2023). The focus of social innovation is therefore on the involvement of communities themselves. Social innovation can also be seen as the opportunity to access resources to make their needs heard and stand up for their needs and prevent people from feeling socially excluded (Laura, 2019).

Social innovation is mainly implemented through a co-creation approach. Like social innovation itself, there is no universal definition of a co-creative approach (Voorberg et al., 2013; Windsor, 2017; Osborne et al., 2016; Osborne et al., 2021). In policy creation it is seen as an approach centred on the needs of the target group to create more suitable measures. The ecosystem actors involved in the topic bear equal responsibility for the process and collaborate to create the agreed-on public services (Bason, 2010; Ansell & Torfing, 2021). Co-creation is typically applied as a non-linear design process that, according to Baker and Moukhliiss (2020), reframes social problems as opportunities and focuses primarily on what is desirable from a user perspective and what is technically feasible and financially viable for the organisation (Kimbell, 2011). Co-creation is also put forward as an approach to individual service-dominant logic, where the end-user of the service is actively involved in the creation of the value or benefit associated with the provision of the service and the interaction of the wider ecosystem of actors is not always necessary (Vega-Vazquez et al., 2015).

In the context of policymaking, co-creation is typically formulated as a design-thinking tool. Design thinking as an approach typically has five stages: (1) stakeholder mapping; (2) problem definition; (3) policy design; (4) prototyping and testing; and (5) communication and dissemination. Co-creation is therefore about finding the most appropriate solutions to shared problems through equal partnership, empowerment of parties and the use of ecosystem resources. Above all, a consensual solution must be found to create and implement new practices (Voorberg et al., 2017a; Windsor, 2017). A key factor is the provision of learning experiences to ensure replicability in other regions (Voorberg, 2017b). A key element in the overall concept of co-creation and the design-thinking approach is the continuous adaptation of the public service (good, intervention), which, according to Osborne (2018), helps continuously develop the service according to the needs of the client.

However, there are a number of internal and inter-organisational barriers to implementing social innovation in the public sector. These may include political

resistance, legislative constraints, ineffective administration, inadequate funding, rigid structures, a lack of skills and knowledge, low motivation, fast-paced work environments, limited scope of change, inadequate teamwork and leadership skills, risk-taking, and accountability (Rogers, 2003; Cinar et al., 2019).

1.4 Policy responses to young people classified as NEET: the Youth Guarantee

This sub-chapter introduces the policies targeting young people classified as NEET, first at the European Union and European Commission levels, and subsequently in Estonia.

1.4.1 Context and support for young people classified as NEET at the European level

Initiated by the European Commission and with the agreement of Member States, the Youth Guarantee has been in place since 2013. Through this, Member States guarantee that young people classified as NEET are supported in finding quality employment, continuing their education or accessing an apprenticeship or traineeship within four months of leaving school or becoming unemployed (European Commission, 2020).

The concept of the Youth Guarantee was first introduced in 1980, with Sweden (1984), Norway (1993), Denmark and Finland (1996) being the first countries to adopt it (European Commission, 2018). In 2013, the European Commission proposed that Member States introduce a unified system. Politically, the Youth Guarantee supports the implementation of the objectives of the European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan (Eurofound, 2021; European Commission, 2021) and stands out from other labour market policies by focusing primarily on young people classified as NEET, youth employment and contributing to job creation for young people (ILO, 2024).

The Youth Guarantee provides Member States with an adaptable framework that allows them to develop support systems suitable for their national contexts. The Youth Guarantee plans of Member States are based on the following guidelines: mapping to identify those young people in NEET situations, available services and necessary skills and creating preventative measures through monitoring and early warning systems; outreach to raise awareness and disseminate information, with active outreach to vulnerable groups; preparation by using profiling tools to develop individual action plans; and provision to align offers with existing standards to ensure quality and equal opportunity (Council Recommendation..., 2020).

The content and extent to which the Youth Guarantee action plans of Member States and their implementation comply with the guidelines are assessed every two years (Council Recommendation..., 2020). The latest evaluation found that while countries have previously tended to focus on reaching young people in

NEET situations, cross-sectoral approaches, tailored solutions, enhancing young people's skills, and links between the labour market and education, the new needs relate to mental health, digital and green skills, rural specificities, co-creation among ecosystems supporting youths, and a greater emphasis on preventing leaving school early (EMCO Review, 2024). It was especially emphasised that the Youth Guarantee requires improved cooperation between ministries and public employment agencies within Member States, in particular by targeting more vulnerable youngsters and improving outreach and preventative measures against leaving school early (EMCO, 2024). The latest interim assessment of the Youth Guarantee in Member States concluded that the Youth Guarantee has often treated young people in NEET situations as regular jobseekers and provided services that are too universal, resulting in case management not considering their complex needs and young people not receiving the help they need (Eurofound, 2024).

In recent years, there has been an upsurge in scientific studies of the Youth Guarantee, with a focus on analyses of various countries. Youth Guarantee actions are seen to be a multifaceted investment targeted at human capital efficiency (Poštrak et al., 2020), as the programme support saw a significant structural shift in the population of young people classified as NEET in almost all Member States in 2014, as the number of young people in NEET situations started to decline (Luca et al., 2019). The Youth Guarantee has been more effective in countries that have developed public partnerships with other sectors, involved social enterprises and civil society organisations, and used non-formal approaches to education (Flynn et al., 2024; Ferreira et al., 2024). Studies also reveal that the options for benefiting from the Youth Guarantee vary between Member States, and include regional disparities within the same country (Bacher et al., 2017; Jongbloed & Giret, 2021). Studies have highlighted that Youth Guarantee-related policies and interventions have often been top-down and centred around labour market institutions, with little social innovation, which may reduce their ability to reach young people in NEET situations (Petrescu et al., 2024).

1.4.2 Context and support for young people classified as NEET in Estonia

Several of the studies within this doctoral thesis (**Studies I, IV and V**) pertain to the Estonian context. Therefore, a brief overview of the scope and background of young people in NEET situations in Estonia, as well as the policy framework supporting them, is provided.

At the end of 2024, there were 22,900 young people (11%) aged 15–29 classified as NEET in Estonia (Statistics Estonia, 2025). The lowest recorded number since the start of the Youth Guarantee (2014) was seen at the end of 2023, with 19,500 young people (9.6%) in NEET situations in Estonia. The share of young people classified as NEET has decreased, but various crises in 2024 have caused a resurgence. According to Statistics Estonia (2025), the share of young people aged 15–29 in NEET situations in Estonia is lower than the European

average. However, the share of young people aged 15–24 in NEET situations exceeded the European average in 2023. Regionally, the main areas of concern are in north-eastern (17.5%), western (14.3%) and southern Estonia (12.0%), compared to the national average of 11%. An experimental study conducted in Estonia confirms that the most common reasons for youth entering or being at risk of NEET status in Estonia include migration background, lacking work experience, having only basic education, or becoming a mother at a young age (Sõstra, 2023). In addition, several analyses indicate regional inequalities (e.g., Käger et al., 2020).

Supporting young people in NEET situations in Estonia has been a strategic priority since 2013 (see Figure 1) when a specific action plan was launched. The development of the Youth Guarantee has been divided into three main periods, each with its own objectives. Research related to the doctoral thesis has shown that while the first period focused on creating support systems in different fields, the second period focused more on cross-sectoral and collaborative approaches to reaching young people, and the current third period, has an increasing focus on attaining a level of intervention needed to meet the actual needs of young people and to maximise the suitability of the support.

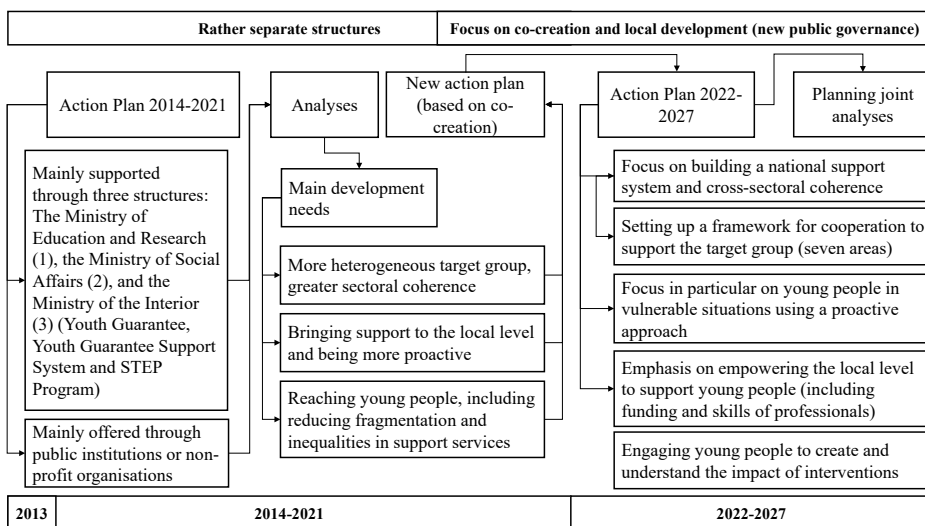


Figure 1. Creating a support system for young people in NEET situations in Estonia, development needs and solutions

The Youth Guarantee action plans for Estonia were approved in 2014 and 2021 (Youth Guarantee Implementation Plan, 2014; Estonian National..., 2021). **Study I** of this doctoral thesis focused on the first period of the Estonian Youth Guarantee, and Studies IV and V on the second period. During the first period (2014–2021), young people in NEET situations were mainly supported through three

structures (see Figure 1): The Ministry of Education and Research, the Ministry of Social Affairs, and the Ministry of the Interior (Youth Guarantee, Youth Guarantee Support System, and STEP Programme). In the second period (2022–2027), the range of stakeholders has expanded. While several EU Member States continued with similar activities in the second period (Eurofound, 2024), Estonia altered several activity areas and the overall coordination, basing these changes on a number of analyses (see Figure 1). The analyses revealed that the changes expanded the range of activities aimed primarily at young people and the selected measures were partly effective for young people (Euroopa..., 2019; Käger et al., 2020). Several activities were new in Estonia, and it took longer than expected to adapt them at the local level (Euroopa..., 2019). Analyses also showed that there is a need to increase the understanding of young people in NEET situations and focus activities on prevention, harmonise the overall coordination of support measures, reduce regional disparities in accessing services, and value the professionals working with youth (Tatar et al., 2017; Kasearu & Trumm, 2018; Euroopa..., 2019; Käger et al., 2020; Melesk et al., 2021). Furthermore, it was found that there are several constraints that reduce cooperation between activity areas (enabling synergy between services, lack of shared information), and there is a need for greater co-creation and coherence across fields (Kõiv et al., 2021; Kvieskienė et al., 2021). Local authorities were seen to play a key role in reaching the young people in NEET situations, and it was found that help should be brought as close to the youth as possible (Beilmann et al., 2023).

Youth Guarantee activities in the second period were coordinated between two ministries: the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, while Youth Guarantee sub-activities were linked to fields such as education, youth work, child protection, social work, employment, careers, culture, internal security and integration (Estonian National Action Plan..., 2021). All ministries representing these sectors and their agencies and strategic partners were involved in the Youth Guarantee steering group, and their circle expanded as necessary (Paabort & Beilmann, 2025). A co-creative approach (see Figure 1) was used for the preparation of the Youth Guarantee action plan and the activity areas for the second period. Estonia's approach aimed to address the multidimensional nature of social problems and promote design-based policy development, creating new opportunities for providing flexible support and services (Taurelli et al., 2025).

Estonia's Youth Guarantee action plan for the second period targeted youths aged 15–29, with particular focus on those at risk of exclusion (Estonian National..., 2021). The focus was on proactive and preventative activities like youth monitoring system, mobile youth work, supporting work experience for minors through entrepreneurs, aligning vocational and higher education with labour market activities, preventing leaving school early, study counselling, wage subsidies, career services, and supporting local governments (Estonian National..., 2021; Paabort & Kõiv, 2022). In addition, specific objectives and indicators were included in the national youth work and welfare strategies (Welfare..., 2022; Youth sector..., 2022) and the term 'young person in need' was defined (Social

Welfare Act, 2020). By 2030, Estonia aims to reduce the share of young people classified as NEET to 8.5% (Youth Sector..., 2022). To support young people in NEET situations, the Youth Guarantee Support System was created as an electronic tool and case management cooperation model for local governments to gather information about young people in the region who are potentially in need of support (Youth Guarantee Support System..., 2023). Reaching young people has increased manifold. Compared to 2018–2022, when the NGTS effectiveness evaluation pilot project was implemented, reaching a total of 700 young people, more than a two thousand young people have been reached each year since 2024 (Youth Guarantee Support System..., 2025).

Since support for young people is divided among several sectors, a national cooperation framework for youth at risk status has been established to enable synergy between activities. It harmonises cross-sectoral activities to ensure smoother access to and movement between services for young people (Pedanik et al., 2021). Also, Estonia has defined a youth-centred approach (Rämmer et al., 2023), developed educational material for building trust between young people and professionals (Rannala & Karu, 2023), and developed a competency model for welfare specialists supporting young people (Ministry of Economic Affairs..., 2024). In addition, support measures in Estonia are mainly funded through the European Social Fund (Estonian National Action Plan..., 2021) and a new approach to state funding is being piloted, where instead of a call for proposals, a conformity assessment is used, which allows the coordinating ministry to enter into dialogue with the applicant, enabling each region to set up its own youth-centred support system according to an agreed framework (Taurelli et al., 2025).

If I were to leave all people aside and imagine that the world begins again tomorrow from a clean slate without any of us here, then I cannot imagine how this would work. Currently, the situation has evolved so that someone knows someone else or someone knows where another is an expert. I do not know of any agreements on the so-called best practices or guidelines which would be valid after all these people leave and move elsewhere. In other words, everything is resting largely on the people. (Professional working with young people)

2. METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In my doctoral thesis, various methodologies were used, which made it possible to map studies and policy documents and obtain input from the ecosystem related to young people in NEET situations. This meant engaging with the young people themselves, the specialists supporting them, coordinating experts and policy-makers and researchers, both at the Estonian and European level (see Figure 2).

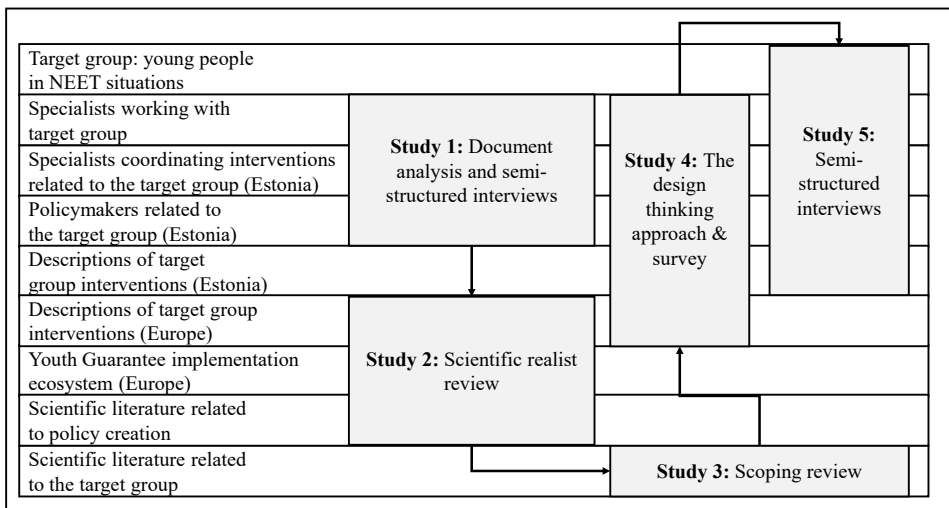


Figure 2: Overview of the research samples, trajectory and research methods used in the doctoral thesis

2.1 Study I: Document analysis and semi-structured interviews

The objective of the first study was to understand how professionals working with young people in NEET situations in Estonia interpret the public policy support system aimed at young people and the related factors influencing the achievement of the policy objectives of the Estonian Youth Guarantee action plan. In this

study, a combined approach was used – **document analysis** and **semi-structured interviews**.

Relevant documents were collected through cooperative partners, webpages and requests for information (e.g., strategies, laws, programme conditions, intervention manuals) and analysed using a **cross-case approach**. Based on the document analysis, the ministries responsible for coordinating services for young people in NEET situations were also mapped. The individuals for the expert interviews were recruited from the respective ministries and related institutions.

The comparative document analysis made it possible to identify relationships between repeated keywords and create a final coding scheme. Subsequently, **content analysis** was used in order to obtain an overview of the texts and to describe the immediate content of the documentation as communication in a systematic manner.

After the document analysis, a total of **nine semi-structured expert interviews** were conducted in February and March 2019. The experts represented the coordinating level (ministries, national-level agencies working with young people in NEET situations), the promoting level (subdivisions of ministries), and the implementing level (service providers). Eight experts represented the public sector, and one expert was from an NGO. The main topics of the interview were sent to the interviewees prior to meeting them. The length of the interviews varied from 45 minutes to an hour.

Transcripts from the interviews were then **coded based on the adapted approach of thinking**, in terms of systems specified by Meadows (2009). The findings were introduced (validated) to the YG Estonian steering group (8 April 2019) and in the development programme for specialists working with youth (1 April 2019).

2.2 Study II: Scientific realist review methodology

The second study aimed to assess Youth Guarantee interventions in various European countries and describe best practices across dimensions of social innovation.

A **scientific realist review methodology** (Hunter et al., 2022) helped to synthesise the intervention literature, looking for underlying causal forces that might explain why interventions work in one context but not in another. First, we searched the European Commission Knowledge Centre public channels for different ideas, theories and processes that reflect best practices in supporting youth to enter the labour market. The **sample included interventions** taken from the European Commission’s Knowledge Centre public channels (website), which is related to the Youth Guarantee and allows all EU Member States to upload their interventions and best practices. The document repository comprises **51 documents** and emerged from **twenty-eight different European countries**. The target population in all the intervention projects were generally young citizens and young people in NEET situations. The documents were written from a

national viewpoint and show the national and collective approaches to extra-curricular services for youth from various EU Member States.

Second, we narrowed the focus of the review by identifying commonalities across the document repository, bringing into focus the web page linked to the Youth Guarantee and the associated documents. Third, we looked for work that presented imperial evidence for appraisal. We appraised the documents independently prior to synthesis.

By **analysing the intervention documents**, we looked at the correlation between the implementation of social interventions (under the Youth Guarantee Programme) and their impact on challenges associated with youth transition into the labour market in different European countries. We developed our coding scheme to reflect the dimensions of Baptista et al. (2019). They argue that government support and recognising the potential for the scaling social innovations should be determined using a categorisation scheme. We identified five layers on how to include social innovation in youth work, namely policy intervention, profit orientation, geographical scale, organisation direction, and social inclusion. Finally, **two coders read the intervention documents** and coded and explained them based on the five layers.

2.3 Study III: Scoping review methodology

The third study aimed to provide a systematic review of research findings and policy conclusions on young people not in education or employment published in scientific literature between 2013 and 2021, and to identify aspects lacking in literature related to young people in NEET situations.

We used a **scoping review methodology** (Whitemore & Knafl, 2005; Torraco, 2016). We mapped the keywords associated with NEET youth policy conclusions to inform new directions for research in this emergent field (Colquhoun et al., 2014).

Building on the **PCC³ framework** that shaped the research questions, inclusion and exclusion criteria were developed using the Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcome (PICO) model as an initial framework. After finalising the search strings, **these were applied to three electronic databases** – Scopus, Ebsco and the Web of Science – and returns were restricted to the period 2013–2021. The timeframe was set to coincide with the first implementation of the EU Youth Guarantee in order to take stock of articles published during this period before the enforcement of the new reinforced Youth Guarantee programme in 2022. Using the **PRISMA-P flow process**, a total of 1,860 papers were identified in the electronic databases (Scopus, $n = 602$; Ebsco, $n = 665$; and Web of Science, $n = 593$). After removing studies that were non-English, inappropriate due to their geographic scope, or duplicates, 279 papers were progressed for review of relevance to the study resulting in 113 papers progressing to the data extraction

³ Population, participants, concept, context

stage. Only titles, abstracts and keywords were considered during the development of the search string.

The papers included in the study were read three times and the data extracted aligned with the **PICO** inclusion and exclusion criteria and was stored in a spreadsheet. Qualitative content analysis was carried out using an inductive scientific realist approach (Mayring, 2004). The analysis **focused on the different academic findings** in the studies that underpin service and policy design for young people in NEET situations. The first stage of this analysis established an initial coding framework of themes and constructed codes. Secondly, each constructed code was then explored to capture commonalities under the initial coding framework. Finally, we **synthesised the aspects revealed** across all the studies and presented contextual findings with each **constructed code**. In describing the results, the main focus is on an **overview of the different findings** in the categories.

2.4 Study IV: The design thinking approach and survey

The fourth study aimed to understand the multidimensional nature of the social issues and ecosystems of young people in NEET situations in rural areas, the contradictions and potential of rational, co-creative, and design-thinking policy-making.

To achieve our aim, we proposed a new method based on **the design-thinking approach** using the experience of the development of the Reinforced Youth Guarantee in Estonia, which employs a co-design approach. Design thinking is a concept and process that converts social problems (Baker & Moukhliiss, 2020) into opportunities and focuses on “what is desirable from the users’ perspective, what is technically feasible, and what is commercially viable for the organization” (Kimbell, 2011:294).

First, we conducted a qualitative **online survey** with the participation of the COST Action Rural NEET Youth Network (19 countries, $n = 36$). This helped us analyse the multiplicity of relevant stakeholders in different countries and the multidimensionality of priorities in policy development for young people in NEET situations. Then we presented the basic assumptions of the *rationalist* policy development approach, which dominated the policymaking arena for many years. Analysis showed that these assumptions are largely unrealistic, leading to a hyperrationality of the relevant actors in policy development, with every deviation from policies being explained through the irrationality of actors.

Then, we **proposed a method for new policy development** for young people in NEET situations based on the design-thinking approach as an alternative and made an in-depth exploration of the Estonian Reinforced Youth Guarantee programme, as it constitutes a good starting point to understand how a design-based policy development mindset may be helpful in overcoming the obstacles young people in NEET situations experience.

2.5 Study V: Semi-structured interviews

The fifth study aimed to understand the perceived needs of young people who are not in education or employment, and the capacities and contradictions within supporting sectors and institutions in responding to those needs. To that end, **we conducted semi-structured interviews with professionals working with young people and young people in NEET situations.**

The sample of specialists was based on Estonian national policy documents on young people classified as NEET and the support systems surrounding them (Paabort & Kõiv, 2022). **On the basis of these documents,** we identified institutions providing services to the young people. Through these institutions, it was possible to reach young people who are in NEET situations, with whom we conducted semi-structured interviews. **Young people in NEET situations participated in the study and in the design of the interview schedule.** Involving young people in designing the schedule of interviews with the professionals provided an opportunity to better understand young people's perceptions of their involvement in services, what they see as the main concerns and what about the services raises questions and misunderstandings among young people. It also enabled the interviewing of professionals to consider the perspectives of young people and to highlight overlaps and divergences in the needs and perceptions of service providers and service users.

Between 2021 and 2023, **17 semi-structured interviews** were conducted, eight with young people aged 18–26 and nine with professionals or experts working for young people. The professionals and experts represented coordinating, supporting and implementing levels.

The main themes of the interviews were sent to all interviewees for review prior to the meeting. The **themes were derived** from the model of cooperation and services for local authorities for young people in NEET situations in Estonia, and the **case management guidance documents for the Youth Guarantee.**

Interviews varied in length from 45 minutes to one hour. **The interview data were analysed thematically** (Braun & Clark, 2006) primarily using a deductive approach to identify themes. The analysis process involved **systematic and repeated reading of the transcripts, coding and code classification** under broad themes.

2.6 Self-reflection, ethical considerations and limitations of the study

The focus of my doctoral thesis is young people. As I have been active in the youth support field since 1997, I will first outline my personal connection to the research topic to ensure transparency. I have been able to immediately apply the results of my doctoral thesis in practice, both in policy and intervention design. Second, I will highlight the ethical choices of involving young people and professionals in my research. Third, I will give overview of limitations of study.

2.6.1 Self-reflection

I started my career as a youth worker in schools (1997) and later became the CEO of the Association of Estonian Open Youth Centres (2008–2018), where I was responsible for the management of the organisation, methodology and content development for youth centres and the implementation of several large projects for at-risk youth. For example, from 2015–2021, I led one of the sub-activities of the Estonian Youth Guarantee (Youth Prop-Up programme⁴), which aimed to support young people who are not in education or employment, helping them overcome adversity and find suitable opportunities to continue their education or enter the labour market. Prop-Up was one of the 25 interventions analysed in **Study II**. This programme experience was also one of the bases for the later creation of the ‘Cross-sectoral Collaboration Model for Supporting Young people classified as NEET and Services for Local Governments’, in the co-creation process of which I also participated. The experience of the co-creation process was explained in academic terms through **Study IV**.

The results of this document later influenced pilot project activities for local governments. It provided insight into how to understand, reach, and support the needs of young people. The conclusions of the pilot project, in turn, formed the basis for funding, which was later implemented through open calls for proposals aimed at local governments. Consequently, when I started my PhD, I was working with young people in NEET situations. The experience I gained allowed me to immediately understand the main academic gaps to explore in my work. My **Study I** was written to understand the main systemic youth support challenges. After the Youth Support programme Prop-Up ended, I moved to work at the Social Insurance Board to continue using and contributing the knowledge I gained through the content and coordination of interventions related to young people in NEET situations.

Between 2022 and 2023, I worked as a Youth Guarantee Adviser at the Social Insurance Board, where my task was to coordinate and implement the second sub-measure of the Youth Guarantee – the Youth Guarantee Support System – which supports young people aged 16–29 in returning to education and entering the labour market. During this period, I was the author of documents referenced in this thesis, such as ‘Insights from the Youth Guarantee Support System Pilot Project 2021–2023’⁵. I was also involved in the creation of the open call for proposals under the compliance assessment model entitled ‘Achieving and Maintaining High Youth Employment’ (development and implementation of the Youth Guarantee Support System) and drafting the ‘Competency Framework for Youth Welfare Specialists in the Youth Guarantee Support System’ for professionals working with young people in NEET situations.

⁴ Noorte Tugila, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/BlobServlet?docId=19651&langId=en>

⁵ Noortegarantii tugisüsteemi pilootprojekti 2021–2023 taipamised. (2023). Sotsiaalkindlustusamet.

Studies II–III contributed to creating theoretical starting points for the application round and placing them in a holistic system view (see Figure 5 in **Study III**).

Since 2023, I have been working as an adviser in the Employment Department of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, focusing primarily on youth employment issues. This role involves drafting legislation and various other related documents and implementing support activities for young people. Within this capacity, I have been able to aid the implementation of the Youth Guarantee support system, shape legislation and review the use of resources channelled through open calls. **Study II** has also influenced the creation of an open call in 2025 for people with health limitations, which focuses on social innovation and the creation of innovative activities through this approach⁶.

In ministry, I am also involved in coordinating the Estonian Youth Guarantee steering group as well as in various thematic groups of the European Commission (such as Youth Guarantee Coordinators of Member States). Knowing the expectations of the European Union and Estonia, and observing the projects of local governments supported through open calls⁷ across Estonia, there was a need to learn even more about the perceived needs of young people in order to further develop existing interventions. **Study V** provided knowledge about the principles that particularly vulnerable young people consider important in their support. This knowledge is particularly important in light of the reforms⁸ taking place in Estonia, where it is even more necessary to proceed from a cross-sectoral approach when supporting young people.

I have acknowledged that my current daily work and my previous experience have both positive and risk-creating effects from the point of view of my doctoral thesis. First, I have had the opportunity to be involved in or observe the development of the topic at the centre of the thesis in Estonia for more than 25 years, which has provided an excellent opportunity to cooperate with institutions at various levels and access documents related to the topic, which help to better understand, analyse and give substance to the processes needed to support young people. In addition, this experience has given me in-depth knowledge of the theories, methods and previous studies in my field. Because of that I have a better understanding of how to define research questions and choose suitable research methods. Previous knowledge has also ensured the efficiency of the progress of my doctoral thesis, because I have been aware of what to find and where. Therefore, it has not been necessary to constantly search for basic information and I have been able to move to the necessary analyses more quickly. Furthermore, previous knowledge and experience helped me maintain innovation in my work because I can notice gaps in current academic knowledge and thereby develop

⁶ Open call: ‘Supporting the employment and job retention of people with health-related limitations through social innovation’

⁷ Open call: ‘Achieving and Maintaining High Youth Employment’ (2023–2029)

⁸ For example, reforms like raising the compulsory school age to 18

new ideas and update the relationships necessary to obtain data, so that the topic is addressed as comprehensively as possible.

However, I have considered that in-depth knowledge of a topic can create a cognitive bias, so I need to be careful not to unknowingly favour certain perspectives and ignore new or controversial views. I have been careful not to become over-specialised, to focus on a narrow topic that can hinder interdisciplinary thinking or the exploration of larger, broader questions. There is also a risk of unconsciously assuming that others know the topic as well. I have acknowledged that this can make it difficult to clearly communicate the results to a wider audience.

Knowing the research topic well gives me a clear advantage in terms of depth and precision, but I have realised that this must also be accompanied by an awareness of the potential dangers. As all the research in this doctoral thesis was carried out in collaboration with co-authors and supported by supervisors, their input ensures the validity of the studies and the doctoral thesis. In addition, data have been collected and verified from multiple sources, and different research methods have been used to investigate the same issue.

2.6.2 The ethics of involving young people and professionals in research

This doctoral thesis comprises five original studies, one involving young people in NEET situations and two involving officials, experts, or professionals at different levels involved in youth support. Based on **Study III**, young people in NEET situations as a social group are significantly underrepresented in public discourse (involvement in policymaking and research). However, within the context of this thesis, the involvement of young people is critical and key to analysing the results. Involving them in the research gave them a representative voice, enabling me to hear their real feelings and perceptions about existing problem areas and support needs. Young people were able to draft interview questions for professionals in one of the studies. During this opportunity, most of the young people had an immediate emotional response as they found it surprising to draft questions for professionals.

Throughout the study involving young people, we considered their situation and the potential impact of the study. In this study, the ethical guiding principle was that participation should not only avoid causing harm to the young people involved but also provide a supportive and empowering experience to young people in vulnerable situations. As I personally conducted all the interviews and have more than 25 years of experience working with young people, including those in vulnerable situations, I ensured that the structure and content of the interview questions created a safe and empowering environment for each young person. Several participants later shared that this approach was supportive and helped them analyse their actual situation through the responses. All the participating young people and professionals were adults and reached through the

institutions involved in the study and their professionals. In addition, each young person was able to choose the location of the meeting.

During the interviews with both young people and professionals, I explained the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation and the procedures that ensure the confidentiality and anonymity of their data. In preserving and presenting the findings, we used the general identifiers ‘young person’ or ‘professional’ to preserve the confidentiality of all participants.

2.6.3 Limitations of the study

There are some limitations of this doctoral study that should be acknowledged. First, the samples for the expert interviews were rather small both in **Studies I** and **V**. Considering the limited circle of actors active in the Estonian youth support field, the sample utilised represents the main actors rather well. However, the composition of the sample cannot form the basis for drawing conclusions and generalisations about other similar programmes.

Second, the author of this doctoral thesis has a close connection to the Youth Guarantee (YG) programme. Interviewees were all aware of the author’s role in the YG: to alleviate the risk of a biased interpretation, the experts were given the opportunity to validate the results.

Third, work in **Study II** also has some limitations that extend the study conclusions to a larger domain of interventions. Analyses were limited by the documented interventions presented using a specific standardised format, which focuses on the accomplishments of the interventions. An in-depth focus on the projects can reveal further information to create a clearer measurement of the social innovation dimensions of interventions. Also, these documents do not reveal information about the social impact of the interventions. A standardised toolbox for measuring the social impact of the programmes has not been developed yet, and this therefore depends on the authors of the reports. The lack of this data made it impossible to build a link between the social innovation in any intervention and its performance. As these interventions are not developed from a social innovation perspective, the analyses were *ex-post-facto* and, sometimes, practically irrelevant, as many of them have already been completed.

Fourth, the systematic literature analysis in **Study III** entails certain limitations, and therefore it cannot be extended to cover all research on young people in NEET situations. The first limitation is related to the underlying choices of looking for studies during the research period in which conclusions were associated with NEET situations. Furthermore, the research is bound to specific databases and does not cover articles not indexed in those databases. That may have resulted in the exclusion of some significant contributions to the field. Second, it is important to point out that the geographical scope of the studies of young people in NEET situations was global. However, this analysis considers research with a scope linked to the European level. Third, it is important to emphasise that the analysis aimed to obtain a broad overview of the variability of the conclusions of scientific literature related to young people in NEET situations.

For this reason, the focus is not on highlighting the most important or priority sub-themes in each sub-topic. Fourth, it is important to point out that the analysis and the search for connections between research papers could only be carried out based on the interventions performed, and therefore do not provide an overview of all opportunities offered to young people in NEET situations in Europe today.

Fifth, **Studies I, IV, and V** rely more on qualitative methods (interviews, survey, observation, action research). Although they provide a deep contextual understanding, they may lead to interpretive and limited knowledge.

In addition, at a theoretical level, the doctoral thesis does not include an exhaustive overview of the approach to policymaking, social innovation, co-creation, social exclusion, vulnerability and well-being. In another context and considering new societal challenges, the aforementioned approaches and results may need to be revised. The results can be interpreted primarily in the context of the Youth Guarantee taking place in this period both in Europe and in Estonia.

*Before there was a traffic light, when it was red, we reacted quickly.
Now, there is no traffic light; there is a forest fire. There is nothing we can do.
We stand on the side of the road and scratch our heads.
If the fire comes very close, we extinguish-react. Prevention has become lax.*
(Professional working with young people)

3. OVERVIEW OF FINDINGS

In this chapter, I highlight the main findings of the studies (**Studies I, II, III, IV, V**).

3.1 Determinants supporting the national coordination of vulnerable youth policy support systems design

The objective of the **Study I** was to analyse the interpretations of professionals working with young people in NEET situations in Estonia regarding the current public policy support system and in particular, the factors that influenced the achievement of the policy objectives of the first phase of the Estonian Youth Guarantee action plan. The study confirmed that during the first phase of the Youth Guarantee, the policymakers and professionals working with young people **lacked an adequate understanding of the core issues**; that is, what problem is being solved and what main change is expected. Both levels stressed that the support strategies and interventions were designed to be used within a single sector (structure), lacking a shared understanding of a comprehensive system for youth support. Document analyses showed that **access to services was not equal across Estonia**, mainly depending on the understanding and readiness of ministries or service providers to provide services in different regions.

Interviews at both levels revealed that there **was a lack of a common vision of the long-term objectives of the system** – information exchange, effectiveness, agreed-upon cross-sectoral roles, and cross-structural process management. There was a need for more **joint cross-sectoral co-creative coordination**, as synergy allows for better outreach and integrated services at the local level. Through joint coordination, support can be provided in line with the needs of young people in NEET situations from heterogeneous backgrounds, thus avoiding legal obstacles at the individual case level.

The experts proposed a **co-creative approach** as a solution, which helps to create a coherent cross-sectoral policy framework for supporting young people in NEET situations, where each sector and level can define clear roles. **They found that more clearly defined functions across all sectors** would reach a larger number of young people and avoid administrative barriers between sectors, as guidelines can be coordinated and managed from the perspective of an agreed-upon support system. This would prevent fragmentation in the support of young people and enable local provision of **support services that are both needs-**

based and non-stigmatising. The study further highlighted that guidelines across sectors should be aligned in terms of effectiveness, with shared **interpretations among experts on what constitutes effective support service delivery.** If the data collected are not comparable, this could lead to false conclusions about the effectiveness of support systems or to unequal treatment. The study confirmed that **comparable data will better highlight** and describe **the potential and synergy of sectors** and support the development of new needs-based interventions. The **joint dimension of partnership and political will** was also considered important, as stronger collaboration with partners leads to more effective cooperation and a higher quality of service. However, these dimensions were not included in the evaluations of effectiveness during the first phase of the Youth Guarantee, which may have reduced the likelihood of cooperation and future joint development processes.

3.2 The potential of social innovation in enhancing youth access to education and the labour market

Study I identified the need for co-creation in interventions as one of the key features of social innovation. Consequently, **Study II** aimed to evaluate and analyse interventions implemented under the Youth Guarantee across European countries as well as the best practices in the different dimensions of social innovation. There was a need to understand the potential of using the principles of the approach and the sustainable ecosystems approach to create or improve opportunities for young people to access education, the labour market, and training. First, the study confirmed that **using a social innovation approach in youth policymaking can find new perspectives** to develop suitable solutions for youth. In the participatory process of social innovation, it is the opportunities or constraints created by actors outside any participatory process, such as funding culture and instruments, organisational structures, the main legal conditions guiding processes, and the willingness of public authorities to intervene and develop processes, which are crucial. The study identified **five main dimensions** of how social innovation in support of young people can be interpreted and considered in policymaking: (1) the rationale for political intervention, (2) the interpretation of profit orientation, (3) the geographic scale of replicability, (4) organisational governance, and (5) social inclusion.

Policy interventions for young people should primarily be seen as a solution to problems in society, where new understandings and partnerships (e.g., public-private partnerships) and changes in youth support systems reduce the obstacles that young people face in their transition from school to the labour market. The focus should be primarily on changes in perceptions and working practices. In the case of social programmes, **concrete results orientation** (e.g., access to education and the labour market) should be interpreted as the everyday needs of young people in NEET situations that have not been met through the services. The **geographic scale of replicability** refers to the ability of social innovations

to spread geographically. This means experimenting and learning from experience to extend the created interventions to other areas with similar social problems. In the case of **organisational** governance, there is a need for a bottom-up approach, which allows for local concerns and the expertise of the relevant target group and ecosystem to be considered. The bottom-up approach is in turn about implementing the principle of **social inclusion**, which also influences the involvement of young people in NEET situations in the process.

The study demonstrated that adopting a social innovation approach in the design of youth interventions can provide the public sector with new know-how with which to develop new formats. This implies changing traditional administrative processes and developing organisational dynamic capabilities. Given that such an approach entails a paradigm shift from an institutional point of view, it requires a certain opposition to the structural principles found in current systems and their relation to the wider ecosystem. Therefore, at the level of political will, it is essential to formulate strategies that support the visibility and acceptance of social innovation. **A paradigm shift in the distribution of public goods** further opens up the possibility to influence access to opportunities for young people. The findings also show that the social innovation approach gives people not only support but also new contacts, relationships and ideas, making **them more resilient in future crises**.

3.3 Key themes in academic literature and the main conclusions for supporting young people classified as NEET

The aim of **Study III** was to provide a systematic review of research findings and policy conclusions on young people not in education or employment published in scientific literature between 2013 and 2021, and to understand which aspects are lacking in the knowledge related to young people classified as NEET. The systematic analysis of the literature provided **five overarching themes**: (1) NEET as a concept; (2) the heterogeneity of the target group; (3) the impact of structures and policies on young people; (4) possible interventions; and (5) the factors influencing youth coping strategies.

First, the study pointed out that a **certain contradiction is built into the term NEET** as an overly homogeneous label applied to a heterogeneous group, which may lead to issues being overlooked. The study also demonstrated the usefulness of this term, as it allows countries to compare data on the target population. However, it is more important for policymakers to recognise the **heterogeneity of the group** and the reasons young people fall into NEET situations, as this will lead to the development of tailored measures for various NEET subcategories. It must also be acknowledged that holding NEET status does not necessarily have negative consequences, as young people have different reasons for having this temporary status and may only need a small push to move on. It is important to observe that exiting NEET status should not be viewed as a goal for all youth, as it may not be a need but an opportunity to get the necessary support.

Second, the study revealed that the work of professionals working with young people is guided by funding rules and structures, and that **there is a growing risk of increased requirements related to performance that focus more on meeting indicators** and may therefore lead young people into the trap of successive systems. Professionals working with young people have a contradictory role because, on the one hand, they are responsible for implementing set guidelines, which means having to push young people towards a specific outcome (entering employment or education), and on the other hand, they are aware of the broader experience of young people and understand that failure to address the actual problem may result in ineffective support and a temporary result. Combined and cross-sectoral policy measures are also seen in the literature as one of the key factors in reaching and supporting more difficult (vulnerable) groups. It also illustrated which policy areas are necessary to support youth inclusion (education, youth, non-formal education, social affairs, culture, employment, and health). The state must therefore establish a legal environment that allows for cross-sectoral cooperation to meet the multifaceted needs of young people.

Third, an analysis of the interventions mapped in the study showed that young people's opportunities in education and employment vary across Europe and that the **coherence of national support systems and structures should not be taken for granted**, considering the fact that even within the same country, similar social groups located in **different regions may require different approaches**. Tailored measures and services must be designed to address not only the individual needs of young people in NEET situations but also the specificities of their local context.

Fourth, the study confirmed that effective support for young people must consist of holistic and flexible activities/services provided in a caring environment that improve their well-being by fostering self-confidence and helping them acquire or strengthen their competencies, connections with others and sense of cohesion. For young people in NEET situations identified in the studies as being at risk of dropping out or those who have already dropped out of education, it is recommended to combine approaches based on an individualised and holistic strategy. These consist of several levels: individual interests aimed at developing work habits, teamwork, self-confidence and career interests; and integrating young people into the education system and/or facilitating their entry into the labour market.

3.4 Design thinking in policymaking with young people in NEET situations

Study IV aimed to understand the multidimensional nature of the social issues and ecosystems of young people in NEET situations in rural areas, the contradictions and potential of rational, co-creative, and design-thinking policymaking. Policy development aimed at young people in NEET situations in Estonia was used as a persuasive example. The study highlighted the contradictions between

today's standard rational approach to policymaking and the possibility of supporting young people in NEET situations. As current policymaking tends to define problems based on expert analyses grounded in economic cost-effectiveness, and the young people in NEET situations are positioned as a labour market indicator, **the multidimensional nature of the problems faced by young people classified as NEET may be overlooked** and the assistance provided may not be sufficient. There is a need to shift the framework from treating young people in NEET situations as a labour market or economic cost issue. This **opens up new opportunities for policymaking** because new perspectives allow for the development of better policy measures and better solutions for such young people. Framing NEET situations as problematic or in terms of the inability of young people to adapt to labour market conditions leads to their stigmatisation, limiting their ability to introduce their perspective to the policymaking process. This can make young people dependent on services. The study found that this conceptualisation must be revised.

To design a more suitable policy framework, it is **essential to understand the nature and roles of the various stakeholders who work with young people in NEET situations**. The study found that most Member States have adopted a centralised approach, giving national governments and public employment offices the leading role in dealing with the issue. The third sector and administrative bodies in counties (development centres) were also mentioned to a limited extent. As the issue of young people in NEET situations is generally perceived as a labour market problem, **the exclusion of other areas reflects the limited perspective of existing policy development**, including the exclusion of the most important stakeholder group – the young people themselves. The study illustrated that economic and employment agendas are central to the **development of policies for young people in NEET situations** and that **the social consequences of NEET status are deemed less important**. The most common political objectives of measures supporting young people in NEET situations were economic growth, increasing competitiveness, creating jobs, improving skills, facilitating the transition from school to work, and reducing inequalities. Therefore, according to our study, the main drivers of policies targeting young people were economic priorities.

The Estonian case analysed in this study showed that **applying design thinking** in policymaking provides **better insight into the perceived reality of youth and the wider ecosystem**. In Estonia, the design-thinking approach introduced more human-centred factors to the policy development process, including factors often ignored in classical policymaking. For example, each stage involved the young people and the related ecosystem to understand the perceptions, patterns, biases, coping mechanisms and values regarding the nature, needs and possible solutions for young people in NEET situations. This approach helped **incorporate different perspectives**, as diversity of opinion is considered essential to finding sustainable solutions. The Estonian example also clarified that in a design-thinking approach, the parties involved in the process become owners of the solution, which facilitates its subsequent more effective implementation.

While policy analysis typically results in a proposal and its implementation depends on its acceptance by policymakers, the example showed that the **result of design thinking can be implemented immediately** because risks to future implementation can be anticipated and **mitigated through discussion during the co-creation process**, including the **preparation of the legal framework** (laws, regulations, funding conditions) necessary for implementing the ideas. In addition, it provides an immediate shared understanding of the competencies of the parties and other resources, supporting further cooperation.

The study also confirmed that the design-thinking approach **is not a linear process** and is, in part, more complex than traditional policymaking, as it requires the participation of all stakeholders in the design process and **ongoing consensus-building**. It was also confirmed that for interventions created through design thinking, collaboration **does not end with the creation of the intervention**. Its implementation, with the support of public resources, is a multi-level, ongoing and continuous learning experience, which in turn fosters mutual learning and constant development of the policies and interventions put in place.

3.5 Key principles of a support system aligned with the perceived needs of youth

Study V explored the challenges faced by young people in NEET situations and the professionals who support them, highlighting divergences in their perspectives on service development and policy improvement. **The results underscore contradictions** between young people's perceived needs and the objectives of existing services, demonstrating the need for cross-sectoral coordination across education, social work, youth work, health, and employment.

Study V demonstrated that effective support requires diverse and **flexible methodologies from prevention to transition**. Importantly, young people identified the stigma, fragmented service transitions, and inflexible practices as the primary barriers to progress. The findings also confirm the group's vulnerability and repeated experiences of marginalisation, **reinforcing the importance of reducing vulnerability factors and adopting inclusive, youth-centred approaches** that align with young people's realities and **coping mechanisms**. By focusing on factors that decrease vulnerability and the role of support in mitigating or restoring vulnerability, it is possible to equip young people with better coping skills. Since every young person's situation and needs are different, solutions can only be effective if the young people themselves are involved in designing services and support systems. An approach that focuses primarily on young people's strengths supports their self-esteem and increases the likelihood of change. Furthermore, communication with the young people in NEET situations should not create the impression that young people are the problem: the problem that needs to be solved is the situation in which young people find themselves due to a combination of circumstances. When supporting young people, it is more effective to strengthen their trust in the support system and

society through a single trusted person because stability in the provision of support helps young people feel that they are in control of their own lives and will not be left alone in a vulnerable situation. Meaningful support for young people, which, in addition to long-term goals, focuses on increasing self-awareness, makes young people more resilient in future crises. Therefore, a major finding of this study emphasises the need for structural, cross-sectoral agreements grounded in a **needs-oriented rebalancing principle**, aligning **policy objectives with young people's self-assessed needs**. Shared evaluations increase the likelihood of improving well-being through tangible changes, while coordinated action across sectors and legislative frameworks is vital for smoother transitions into education, employment, and adulthood.

Finally, the study identified **seven key expectations and principles** expressed by young people that policymakers need to consider in order to better support them: minimal information flow requirement, situation-based communication, meaning-based management, co-creation and reciprocal partnership, one-shop management, needs-based rebalancing, and long-term legitimate expectations. Integrating these principles into policy design can strengthen support according to the youths' perceived needs and enhance their chances of overcoming their vulnerability. Further explanations of the principles established can be found in the "Glossary of terms" section of the thesis.

The important thing is not about writing ticks down... the important thing is to see their triggers. Once we solve the first basic need, the iceberg issues will slowly start to be solved. Already, the process of change is coming. They don't want to do anything when their stomach is empty... because their blood sugar is low.
(Professional working with young people)

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of my doctoral thesis is to develop an evidence-based model for public sector policymaking when working with young people who are not in education, employment or training. The doctoral studies enabled the identification of six main findings.

4.1 Thesis I: Interactions and interdependencies between policy and institutional frameworks in different sectors and levels influence the effective support of young people in NEET situations

Young people in NEET situations are a heterogeneous target group (**Studies I, III, & V**) whose support requires a cross-policy approach (**Studies I, III, IV, & V**) and coordination (**Studies I & V**), which influences the outreach, support and potential lasting impact of outcomes. However, the realisation of these changes depends on a number of conditions, such as a shared understanding of the core of the problem, political will, agreed-upon functions and legislation.

This doctoral thesis provided the understanding that if the interplay of political frameworks at different levels is not considered, support may not be accessible or have a lasting effect for young people (**Studies I, III, IV, & V**). Therefore, if political interventions are designed for young people in NEET situations as a heterogeneous group to be used only within a single sectoral structure, this does not allow for a common understanding from the perspective of a comprehensive system for supporting young people (Furlong, 2006; O'Reilly et al., 2018; Rocca et al., 2024; Petrescu et al., 2024). This can reduce the overall availability of services and the relevance of their content to actual needs (**Studies I & V**).

Studies I, III and **V** highlighted that the core of the problem might be a lack of political will, as there is no consensus on the content of the target group and the necessary support (see Figure 3). **Study IV** confirmed the expectation that since the problems solved by policies do not automatically exist but are constructed by society itself (Cairney, 2021), the issue of young people in NEET situations also became a priority or attracted attention as a *social* problem, which led to the launch of the European Commission's Youth Guarantee initiative in 2013 (**Studies I–V**). As Member States were able to make their own decisions

regarding their action plans, following a few guidelines (**Study I**), some competition may have arisen between *problems* and differences in interpretation in policymaking. However, these interpretations influence the design of policy measures targeting youth (Eichhorst et al., 2017) and may conflict with young people’s actual needs. **Studies II, III and IV** also confirmed that the main implementers of the Youth Guarantee in Member States are employment services. Lack of involvement of other sectors may limit outreach to young people in NEET situations. However, in addressing the problems of need to encompass the broader cross-sectoral agreements (Trein & Tosun, 2021; Lauri et al., 2025) in areas (like school to work) where youth transitions occur (Maguire, 2010; Stuart, 2020). Policy solutions need to include coordinated and jointly developed legislation, as combined and cross-sectoral policy measures are seen as a key factor in reaching and supporting young people in NEET situations (**Studies I & III**; Eurofound, 2024; ILO, 2024; Amendola, 2021). The trade-offs between policy levels must therefore be considered when designing effective policies for young people.

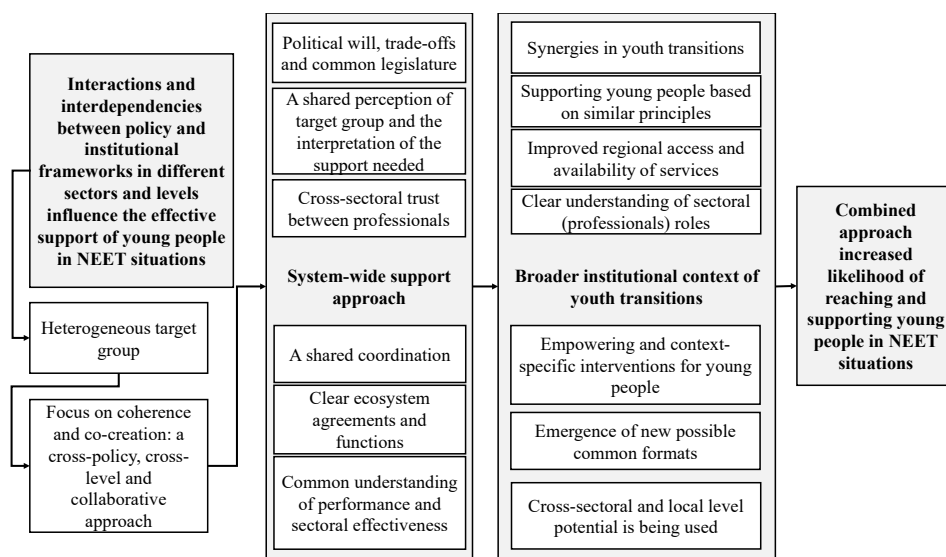


Figure 3. Combined approach, results and fidelity criterias in the policy frameworks of different sectors and levels that interact to influence effective support for young people in NEET situations

The **five studies** of the doctoral thesis confirm previous knowledge that support for the target group occurs primarily within fields such as education, social work, youth work, employment, career counselling, integration, health and internal security, which leads to the best common solutions by employing synergy (**Studies II & IV**) and empowerment (**Studies IV & V**). The cross-sectoral collaborative approach provides a good basis for a national problem-solving and support

system (**Study IV**), where each sector, level and related institution can define its own function and metrics for performance evaluation in a coordinated manner (**Studies I & IV**). **Studies I and V** clearly demonstrated that there should be no inconsistencies in the perceptions of professionals supporting young people within a system, both in terms of the roles of different sectors and in interpreting the effectiveness of the support provided to young people. Therefore, agreeing on guidelines reduces the risk of professionals feeling less valuable from the perspective of a comprehensive system (Beck, 2015).

Policy design using co-creation (**Study IV**) and subsequent actions in synergy (see Figure 3) have an impact on the development of cross-sectoral trust-based collaborative relationships, and thus on the emergence of new and potentially more appropriate interventions (**Studies I & IV**). This, in turn, increases trust between sectors (Rannala & Karu, 2023) and creates the opportunity to more consciously highlight sectoral potential and synergy. Clear understandings of the functions of the ecosystem within a comprehensive system (Ansell & Torfing, 2021) reduce the risk of omitting a sector or drawing the wrong conclusions about the potential and actual effectiveness of various support systems (**Studies I & V**). In addition, it minimises the ethical dilemmas in choices that, due to indicators, may pressure young people to adopt services or decisions that are not yet within their reach (**Studies I & V**). This reduces the chances of young people accessing services that are not yet suitable for them (Ellena et al., 2024).

A cross-sectoral system could also address the issue of young people's long-term legitimate expectations (**Study V**) and the inequality of regional opportunities. **Studies I–V** confirmed that a large portion of the services currently available for young people in NEET situations are temporary. This conflicts with the idea that the target group may require support beyond the end of the project period (**Studies III & V**). To reach more young people, we need to avoid barriers between sectors and the fragmentation of services. Unambiguous activities and service functions enable consistent information exchange and coordination (**Studies I, II, & IV**). Therefore, a cross-sectoral approach can create more appropriate and effective integrated services for young people, thereby generally increasing the synergy between various service providers (**Studies I & V**), including interactions between related policies (**Study III**). Furthermore, jointly designed measures and services offered in synergy enable the provision of a wider range of services to young people, and thus reduce regional disparities (**Studies I, III, & V**; Simões, 2024). Regional and local levels also require cross-sectoral agreements, as a context-specific approach to the target group is needed (**Study III**). A common understanding can empower the local level, whose resources have a significant impact on supporting young people (Holte et al., 2019; Gilchrist, 2019; Jonsson et al., 2022; Ferreira et al., 2024).

Therefore, the role of policymakers is to create an environment that supports cross-sectoral and multi-level cooperation, recognising that young people's access to support depends on how institutions and actors work together (see Figure 3). This requires political will, trust, coordination, shared understanding, and clear responsibilities across sectors. Effective cooperation improves access

and regional availability of services, supports smoother transitions for young people, reduces pressure on professionals, and enables more needs-driven solutions. Without reducing policy inconsistencies, social risks linked to change cannot be adequately addressed.

4.2 Thesis II: Social innovation and a co-creative approach to policymaking have a positive effect on the mechanisms leading to social change for young people in NEET situations

Studies I, III, IV, and V demonstrated that the multi-faceted needs of youth in or at risk of NEET status require an inclusive and more collaborative policymaking process to overcome this vulnerability. Appropriate and lasting solutions to the heterogeneous problems of young people cannot be provided without knowing how they perceive the systems set up to support them.

By engaging the target group, policymakers are provided with knowledge of relevant ways to reach (Kolouh-Soderlund, 2013; Osborne, 2018; Torfing et al., 2021) and support them, and the potential risks of youth not getting timely support (**Studies I & V**). Therefore, an inclusive approach (see Figure 4) to policymaking accounts for the perceived realities of young people and stakeholders and makes them the owners of the solution (**Study IV**). This, in turn, ultimately facilitates more effective implementation (Osborne et al., 2021).

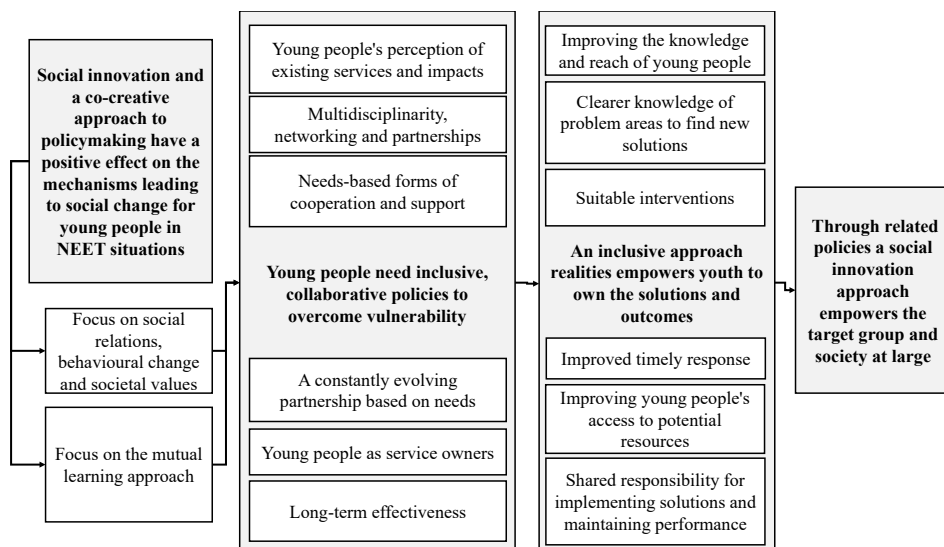


Figure 4. Combined approach and results that influence the empowerment of young people in NEET situations and society at large, based on a social innovation approach to policymaking

Studies II and IV illustrated that this approach to policymaking can be achieved through social innovation. Social innovation allows for a better understanding of the young people at risk of or classified as NEET (Neumeier, 2011; Voorberg et al., 2017a) and the creation of new forms of multidisciplinary collaboration, which young people themselves can contribute to in the design process (**Study IV**). As this approach shifts focus from public expectations to generating new societal value, including more self-aware young people through networks of discussion and input (see Figure 4) and cooperative activities (Moore, 1995; Hartley, 2005; Voorberg et al., 2013; **Study V**), each individual is part of creating the necessary public services. Therefore, when using the social innovation approach, policy interventions can be understood as a collaborative process to address an agreed-upon societal problem (e.g., supporting young people classified as NEET with re-entering education or the labour market), which creates new forms of needs-based support (interventions), with a particular focus on empowering young people through social relationships, behavioural changes and the creation of new value (**Study II**). As creating societal value requires policymakers to have the ability to manage long-term relationships with different parties (state and local level), this requires a focus on broad stakeholder engagement, an open mindset and an adaptable and mutual approach to learning (Osborne, 2016; Lepik & Kangro, 2020). Therefore, it is important to consider that the focus of policymaking for young people in NEET situations is on new partnerships as well as solutions.

As **Studies II, III, and V** confirmed, social innovation includes an important collaborative factor (Voorberg et al., 2013, Windsor, 2017). Through a co-creative approach, it is possible to find solutions to a commonly defined problem and create activities or services to support young people. As the co-creative process includes ecosystem actors from different fields and levels, including the target group itself, it also gives them equal ownership of the process. **Studies IV and V** showed that considering the needs of the target group and the capacities of service providers allows young people in NEET situations to make their needs heard and stand up for legitimate expectations. This contributes to a sustainable society and reduces social exclusion (Laura, 2019; Cedeño, 2023), as young people can access resources that support them (Figure 4).

A fundamental aspect of the concept of co-creation is the continuous learning process (Powering European..., 2013; Hartley et al., 2017; Torfing et al., 2019), and the ongoing adaptation of public services. According to Osborn (2018), this improves the service in line with individual needs. In this way, compared to traditional rational policymaking, co-creation in the context of social innovation can focus on what is more effective in the long run from the perspective of the target group participating in the public service (Saloniemi et al., 2020; Lauri et al., 2025). From the perspective of designing policies for young people in NEET situations, this dynamic allows for a continual awareness of the support ecosystem's functioning, thereby allowing for timely responses to emerging social issues. Therefore, the co-creation approach enables more human factors into the policy development process to understand the perceptions regarding the nature, needs, and possible solutions for young people in NEET situations, while the

parties involved in the process also become joint owners of the solution, which facilitates a more effective implementation.

Studies II, III, and IV confirmed that targeted interventions in Europe usually involve a centralised approach, where the ecosystem for policymaking for young people mainly comprises ministries, public employment services and local authorities. Implementing social innovation in practice in this complete ecosystem therefore requires a public sector understanding of mutual learning, constantly renewed partnerships and networking. If we follow the co-creation approach, we know the perceptions of young people about existing services and their impacts (see Figure 4). This opens up opportunities for new forms of collaboration and long-term results, improves outreach and involves the target group in taking responsibility for implementing the solution.

4.3 Thesis III: A paradigm shift in interpreting policy effectiveness as a common public good ensures more effective support for young people in NEET situations

Providing support based on the perceived needs of youths at risk of or classified as NEET requires changes in the current conventional processes of policymaking and related strategic management processes at both national and local levels (**Studies I, II, & IV**). **Study II** identified that while the use of the concept of social innovation in policymaking for young people in NEET situations allows for the creation of solutions that are more relevant to the needs of young people, it also requires a paradigm shift in our understanding of the distribution of public goods (Moore, 1995; Hartley et al., 2017; Torfing et al., 2021), which in turn affects how we assess the effectiveness (efficiency) of the support offered.

Studies I, III, IV, and V also confirmed that the social consequences of NEET situations have been considered a lower priority in defining the effectiveness of support for young people, and this leads to the realisation that the current prevailing approach based on participation and numerical measurements (participation rate) can no longer be the only option as it does not show the dimensions and variability of actual outcomes. This also means that the goods generated by the synergy between sectors go unnoticed.

In policymaking (see Figure 5), the shift in the public good paradigm implies in particular interpreting the purpose of policy interventions and methods for achieving set goals, but also governance and the effectiveness of policies and related practices through the objectives of social inclusion (**Studies II & IV**, Vega-Vazquez et al., 2015; Osborne, 2018). While **Studies I** and **V** confirmed that the perceptions agreed upon as a result of current policymaking governance processes may no longer match the actual needs and capacities of the target group, according to **Study IV**, the implementation of these social innovation-driven changes may entail some conflict with the structural principles in current systems (e.g., participation-based outcome indicators, output indicators (rates) derived

from labelled funding) and their relationships with the ecosystem that supports young people in NEET situations. However, if these problems are not addressed, it might not be possible to adequately mitigate the consequences or risks (García-Fuentes, 2019; Holte et al., 2019; Amendola, 2021; Lauri et al., 2025), and young people may not receive the help they need (Iacobuta & Ifrim, 2020).

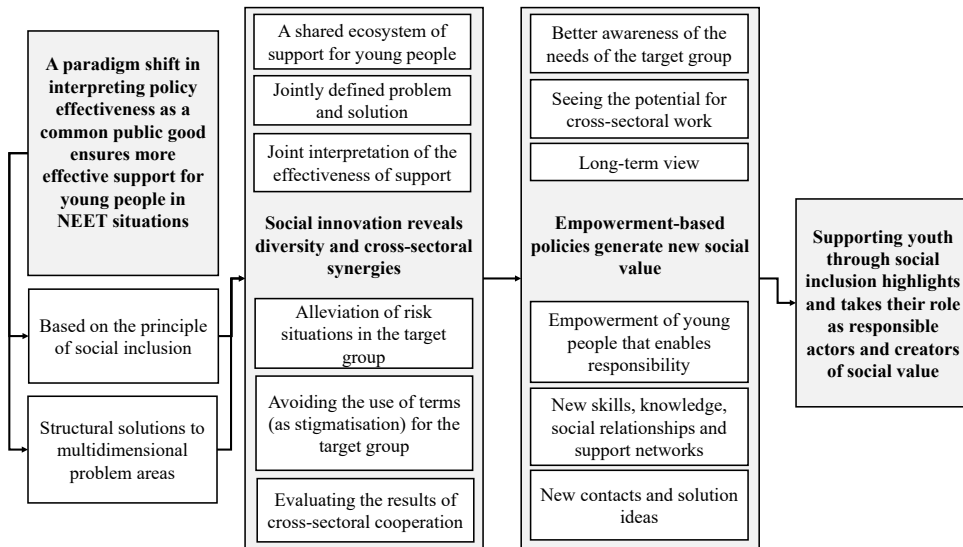


Figure 5. Combined approach and results for interpreting the performance of policy-making to approach empowerment based on the needs of the target group

Studies II and IV showed that creating cost-based interventions and turning the target group into a labour market indicator obscures the multidimensional nature of the real problems of the young people classified as NEET (Maguire, 2015). Moreover, identifying young people in NEET situations as a problem group unable to adapt to labour market conditions can lead to stigmatising these youth (Thornham & Gómez Cruz, 2016; Bonnard et al., 2020) and limiting the potential perspective of policymaking, including the exclusion of the target group itself (**Study IV**; Thompson, 2011; Ferreira et al., 2024). Such outcomes further increase the vulnerability and social exclusion of the target group (Bacher et al., 2017; Virokannas et al., 2018).

Study II showed that, based on the social innovation approach as a new paradigm, when determining outcome metrics in policy design, interventions should be interpreted as providing social value and meeting social needs more broadly. This influences the well-being of the target group (Schweiger, 2019; Dumouilla et al., 2021), highlighting the importance of social relationships and support networks (Jonsson & Goicolea, 2020). Under the new paradigm based on social value, the focus is on the longer-term view and the understanding (Saloniemi et al., 2020; Lauri et al., 2025) that the effectiveness of the support provided to the

young people can be seen from an individual perspective in terms of not only the immediate solution but also future contacts, new skills and relationships, and the ideas generated (**Study II**). Instead of helping and supporting the youth, it is more important to empower them (see Figure 5). This helps the youth realise that they are responsible for their own path forward (Simmons, 2017; Avila & Rose, 2019). Also, **Study II** confirmed that the person receiving support or services is more resilient and able to handle potential crises (Taru, 2024). This requires us to review existing services to ensure they meet the objectives to be achieved; for example, services that may stigmatise youth are not in line with the principles of empowerment (Avila & Rose, 2019). Policies based on the principle of empowerment create a developmental environment that enables the target group receiving support to create new social value, such as creating their own business and new jobs for others (**Study IV**). The support received not only focuses on survival in the moment but also supports sustainable performance through the acquisition of new knowledge and skills (Aflaki et al., 2023).

Therefore, adopting the new paradigm in the public sector requires reducing a number of internal and inter-organisational barriers. These may include political resistance, legislative constraints and the process and pace of their coordination, ineffective administration, lack of skills and knowledge, lack of motivation, and the emergence of new risks and taking responsibility for them (Rønshaugen et al., 2024; Kangro, 2025). However, mitigation of at-risk situations in the youth is possible if the definition of the performance of the linked ecosystem is based on social inclusion, tackling multidimensional problem areas commonly defined problems and solutions via a cross-sectoral approach (see Figure 5). This will make it possible to notice the real needs of the youth and to focus on a long-term view, with new skills, knowledge and social relations at the core.

4.4 Thesis IV: By focusing policies primarily on living situations that enhance well-being and reduce vulnerability, it enables young people in NEET situations to manage better in the long term

When creating interventions, supporting youth in or at risk of NEET status requires, in addition to shifting the public good paradigm, a shift in the paradigm surrounding support for the individual. **Studies I, III and V** confirmed that young people in NEET situations perceive a certain discrepancy between the conditions and implementation of existing support systems and their actual needs and receptiveness. The young people pointed out that the solutions and services offered do not always enable trust and security, and/or do not match their abilities (**Studies I & V**). As a result, they may forgo support (**Study V**; Rikala, 2019).

Studies I, III and V highlighted that the vulnerability and decrease in well-being resulting from the situation of young people is linked to their social background and the broader context of their daily living environment and that the

potential effectiveness of support for the individual depends on their previous experience. This broader context includes the attitudes of both the young person and the community (society) around them, their current needs, the immediate network and the available resources (personal and structural). As reducing situations that cause vulnerabilities can support the well-being and ability of young people in NEET situations to cope overall (Virokanna, 2018; Schweiger, 2019; Gustavsson & Jonsson, 2023), taking this into account when designing policies can increase the likelihood of the support being successful (see Figure 6).

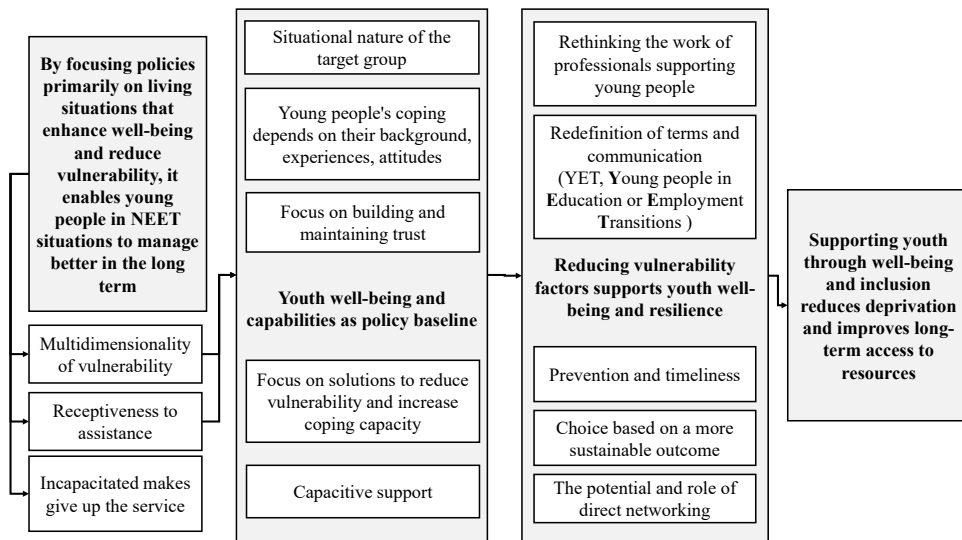


Figure 6. Combined approach and results for policymaking to facilitate the reduction of target group deprivation and access to resources

As the vulnerability of youth in the target group may be long-lasting and persistent (Virokannas et al., 2018), it is important to consider that it may worsen their situation further. **Study V** illustrated how to positively influence young people classified as NEET and how to prevent further harmful situations. To that end, support measures must first focus on reaching young people and building trusting, secure relationships and well-being; that is, promoting situations that reduce vulnerability. Considering how the structures around the target group and the institutions involved and their staff make sense of young people and supporting them (Poštrak et al., 2020; Torfing et al., 2021), this knowledge can be used to reduce the contradictions in institutions perceived by young people. Since the immediate network plays a major role in reducing vulnerability (Kevelson et al., 2020), it is necessary to support not only the young person but also their network (**Study V**), which prevents relapses and dependency on a specialist (Iacobuta & Ifrim, 2020). Jonsson and Goicolea (2020) also confirm that change and recovery are most likely to occur when support for young people

and their networks is based on approaches centred on trust, relationships and security. These principles help rebuild a young person's self-esteem as they focus on both establishing and maintaining trust (Rannala & Karu, 2023). **Study V** confirmed that if the focus is on empowering youth, they will come to understand that only they can create change. This establishes the conditions for more effective assistance. The young person needs to understand that in order to take responsibility and achieve results, they have the right to control their own life (**Study V**).

The results of the doctoral thesis also showed that we should reconceptualise the term and the acronym used for young people classified as NEET. The problem cannot be prevented or solved if the young people cannot recognise themselves in the term and its image (Rikala, 2019), and therefore providing a support service that reduces their vulnerability. Applying an overly homogeneous concept to a heterogeneous group does not allow for effective interventions, as the multidimensional and situational nature of vulnerability is not considered (**Studies III, IV, & V**). Failure to take this into account may lead to even greater exclusion and a general decline in daily well-being (Schweiger 2019; Dumouilla et al., 2021) as support measures do not reach the youth in time. In addition, **Study V** showed that young people do not wish to be defined through the role of a person in need. We need to focus on opportunities arising from needs rather than on shortcomings arising from the situation from the perspective of society.

Consequently, by focusing on the multidimensional and situational nature of vulnerability in policymaking (see Figure 6), and taking into account that young people's susceptibility to help depends on their background, network, experiences and mindsets, a young person can be brought to resources through a trusting relationship and empowering support, which in turn will enable them to exit more quickly.

4.5 Thesis V: Following the principles of need-based rebalancing reduces the exclusion of disadvantaged target groups and creates new forms of support that are more accessible and flexible

Young people in NEET situations may have different coping strategies and different levels of willingness to accept help or participate in services. **Studies I, III, and V** demonstrated that young people in NEET situations are very often united by a constant sense of anxiety, low self-esteem, mental health issues, and fear of change. At the same time, in the last decade, young people in NEET situations have been seen mainly as a labour market indicator (**Study IV**) and whose absence from the labour market means losing out on tax revenue (**Studies I, II, & IV**).

Assessing young people's support needs only from an economic perspective takes the focus away from the actual needs of young people in NEET situations (Iacobuta & Ifrim, 2020; Ellena et al., 2024). The assistance provided to the

young person may therefore not be sufficient (**Study IV**), and it is also a rather inefficient use of resources from the state’s perspective.

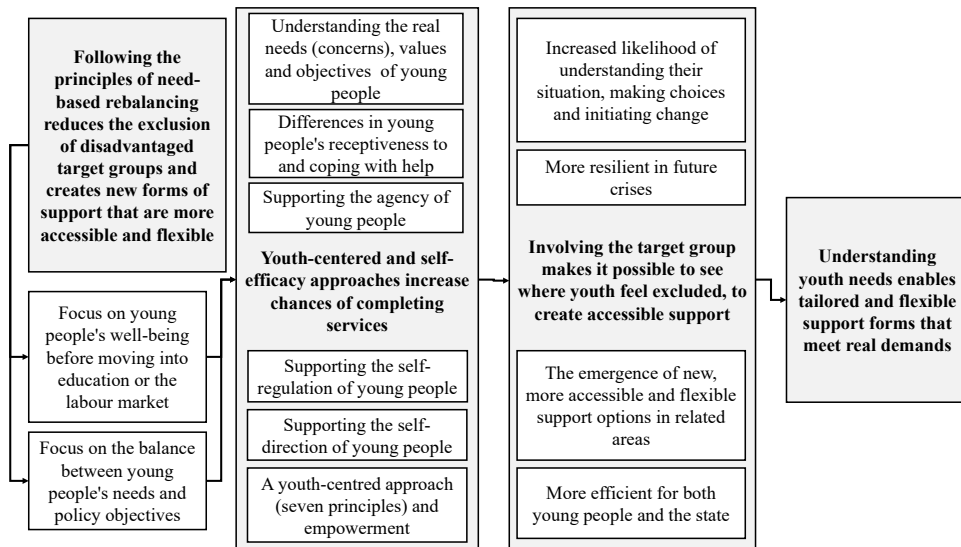


Figure 7. Combined approach and results for policymaking to ensure support for young people and the development of new, needs-based-focused formats

Study II confirmed that for a more lasting impact, interventions need to prioritise values and objectives uniting the target group, and **Study V** identified more community-based and participatory approaches to support interventions. These principles are essential for improving access to information, education, support services, and labour market opportunities. Therefore, policymaking must apply principles where policy design and the support of a specific young person places equal importance on the needs and self-realisation expressed by the target youths themselves, as well as societal expectations through related policies (see Figure 7). A joint assessment can be used to improve a person’s well-being in a given aspect by changing the situation (Helne & Hirvilammi, 2022; Gustavsson & Jonsson, 2023).

Simultaneously, **Studies II, III, IV, and V** confirmed variations in the involvement of young people in the design of interventions addressing their needs across Member States and that the effectiveness of such interventions still depend only on the awareness of institutions within Member States (Eichhorst et al., 2017). A lack of engagement with the target group may undermine the likelihood of achieving effective outcomes, as young people’s real perception of available support and their needs is unknown. As confirmed by **Study IV**, participatory approaches help participants become owners of the solution, which also facilitates more effective implementation at a later stage and facilitates an understanding of the real needs of young people (**Studies IV & V**). However, building on the concept of social inclusion (**Studies II, III, & IV**), whereby individuals

influenced by young people in NEET situations can be more consciously involved in the processes directed towards them, results in better knowledge of the target group, behavioural patterns and gaps in support (Soutter et al., 2013; Mullin, 2014; Andresen, 2014). This knowledge enables the creation of new and more flexible forms of support. Therefore, focusing on understanding the situation of the target group and the young person's capacity to act as a solution before moving into the labour market or education, helps to identify areas where young people feel mainly excluded, allowing this knowledge to be used to create new, more accessible and flexible forms of support (see Figure 7).

4.6 Thesis VI: Following the equisupport model creates equal conditions for young people to participate in their own support pathways, grounded in equity and legitimate expectations

Based on the doctoral thesis, I propose the **model of equisupport** (*toeðiglus*) to empower young people (see Figure 8). This compound word is created based on the nature of the approach, which ensures that young people have equal opportunities to participate in the creation of solutions and policies, as well as equity. Through this model we also acknowledge that each young person's path, challenges, and strengths are and can be unique. Instead of offering the same assistance to everyone, through co-creation with youth we can tailor support that will meet each individual's specific circumstances and needs. This approach promotes equitable access to services and support through human-centred and flexible methods.

The implementation of such an approach also requires adopting a social innovation dimensions (e.g., reason and benefits of political interventions, organisational management) and co-creative partnership in the policymaking process and embracing inclusive, empowering and confidence-building principles when working with youth (see Figure 8). This need was confirmed in all studies but more precisely by **Studies I and V**. The studies showed that support for youth is more effective when we prioritise the young person and their needs. Support should therefore begin with getting to know them and focusing on their perceived needs. Approaches that prioritise youth maintain such a focus (Rämmer et al., 2023; Thøgersen, 2024) that empowers young people to be more self-regulating and self-directed (Bandura, 1997; Kõiv & Saks, 2024; Kõiv et al., 2025). Focusing on empowering young people in turn increases the likelihood of youth completing the service and receiving more sustained support (Simmons, 2017; Avila & Rose, 2019), as they are more likely to be able to make sense of their environment, make choices and initiate change (**Study V**; Taru, 2025). Therefore, the strength of the equisupport model is in its ability to identify individual needs and strengths, provide needs-based (indicated) support, and continuously evaluate how it is achieving justified support.

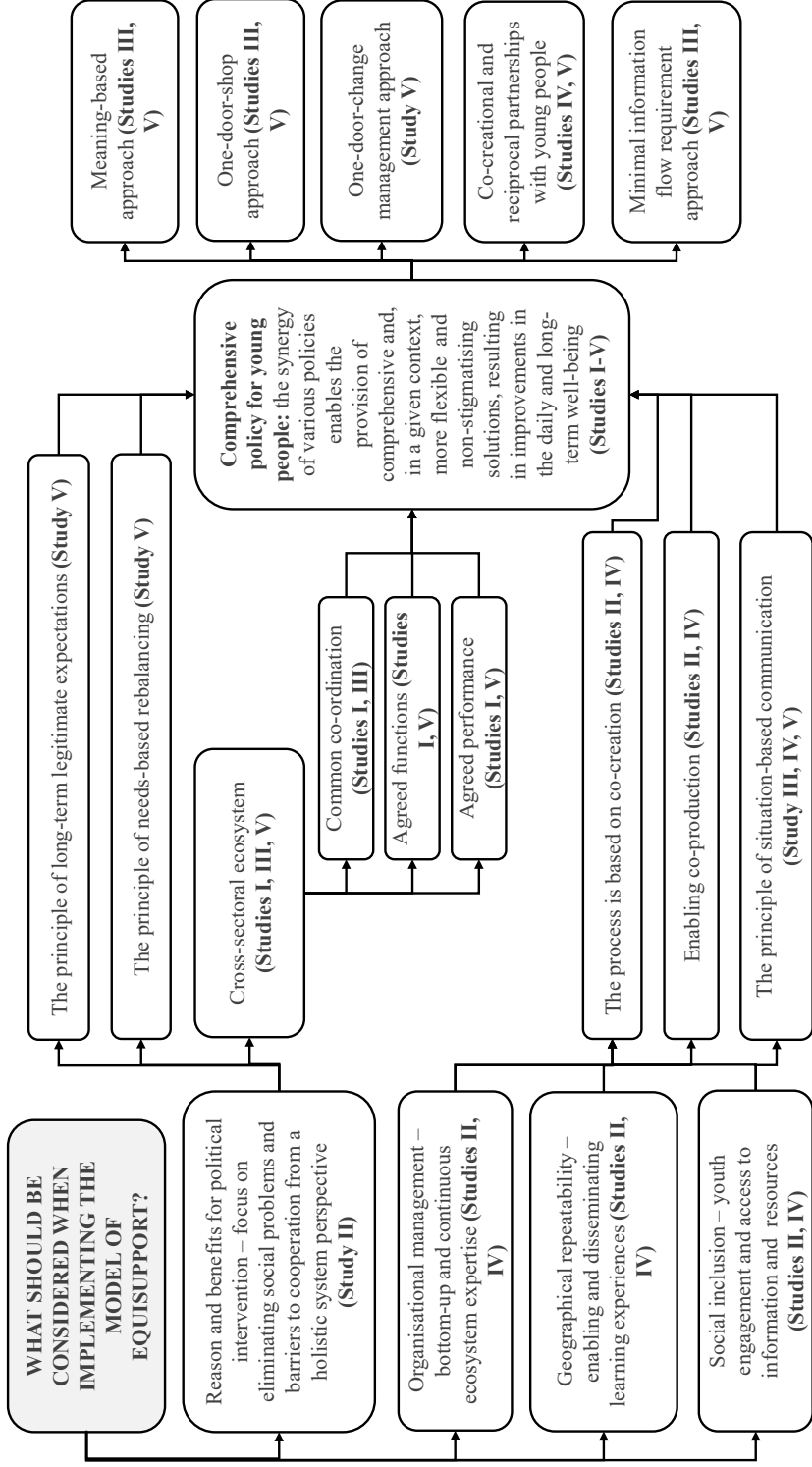


Figure 8. Equisupport model policy principles for young people in education or employment transitions

Based on the equisupport model and the growing body of research highlighting the transitional and situational nature of vulnerability, I propose concept of **Young person in Education or Employment Transitions (YET)** as an additional term (and acronym) for use in political discussions. The term denotes any young person who is temporarily not involved in education or the labour market due to their current life situation or other circumstances, and for whom alleviating or improving these circumstances would allow them to re-engage in education, work, or other self-fulfilling activities. While the acronym NEET has provided an important statistical and policy framework, it was developed primarily to describe labour market attachment at a given point in time and does not fully capture the dynamic and transitional character of young people's life situations emphasised in more recent research (Virokannas et al., 2018; Dumouilla et al., 2021). By defining young people through their current situation rather than their status, the new concept highlights the temporality of vulnerability and frames progress as a process of transition (Maguire, 2010; Saloniemi et al., 2020; Stuart, 2020; Bonnard et al., 2020). This framing supports a more development-oriented understanding of youth support, which has been important for sustained engagement with services (Rikala, 2019; Bonnard et al., 2020). Supporting young people can thus be seen as a journey towards longer-term goals, whether education or labour market participation, and the concept also enables more equal treatment of young people whose pathways may not lead directly to the open labour market, for example due to health reasons but who nevertheless seek to fulfil their potential. From a societal perspective, the equisupport model helps focus policies on facilitating exits from disadvantaged situations before formal entry into education or employment and softens referrals that young people may not yet be ready for.

Glossary of equisupport terms

As a result of this doctoral thesis, I have developed and defined the terminology necessary for implementing the concept of equisupport, which must be considered when creating interventions targeted at young people.

Co-creation and reciprocal partnership [*koosloome ja vastastikune partnerlus*]:

an approach to policymaking that recognises that a co-creative partnership facilitates understanding how the target group perceives existing systems, enabling the formulation of more effective and sustainable joint solutions to both societal issues and specific support needs.

Effective support [*mõjus tugi*]: a young person has received help that is appropriate to their self-identified needs.

Equisupport [*toeõigus*]: A principle in service and policy design that ensures young people have **equal opportunities** to participate in the **co-creation of their own services**, grounded in **equity** and **justified support**. According to this principle, we acknowledge that each young person's journey, challenges, and strengths are and can be unique. Rather than offering the same form of

assistance to everyone, we adapt our support to each individual's specific circumstances, needs, and capacities.

Long-term legitimate expectation [*pikaajaline õigustatud ootus*]: the legitimate assumption that, under the National Youth Guarantee Agreement, young people will receive long-term effective help and support according to their perceived need, even when the funding of support systems is of a temporary nature (project- or programme-based).

Meaning-based change management [*tähenduslik muutus*]: an empowering approach in the interventions, where support for the target group focuses on the person's strengths and while trusting them establishes a lasting safe, caring and informal environment.

Minimal information flow requirement [*minimaalse teabevoovajadus*]: an approach to designing policies that focuses on empowering the person over quickly obtaining and sharing information with partners, emphasising that only the person can decide on their needs and the actors to be involved.

Needs-based rebalancing [*lahendusvajaduste tasakaalustus*]: an approach to policymaking which aligns the goals and effectiveness of the support to be balanced between the target group's own assessment of their needs (or equally considers the group's identified primary needs) and the general expectations of the policy.

One-stop change management [*„ühe ukse“ muutuste juhtimine*]: an approach to interventions where a single trusted person (process manager) is agreed upon among the parties supporting the person, who will liaise with other service providers as necessary; the process manager does not necessarily have to be the main service provider and the young person can make the choice themselves.

Situation-based communication [*olukorrapõhine kommunikatsioon*]: an approach to policymaking that focuses internal and external communication on the situation and support needs of the target group and considers that the persons themselves are not the problem.

Young people in Education or Employment Transitions (YET) [*noored haridus- ja tööelulistest üleminekutes*]: young people who are temporarily not involved in education or the labour market due to their current life situation or other circumstances, and where improving their situation would allow them to re-engage in education, work, or other self-fulfilling activities.

CONCLUSION: No one is left behind

My doctoral thesis focuses on young people who, for various reasons, are in a disadvantaged situation and are not participating in education or the labour market. In policy discourse, the internationally recognised acronym NEET refers to young people aged 15–29 who are not in education, employment, or training (Mascherini et al., 2012). My work is partly based on autoethnographic elements, drawing on my long-term professional experience working with youth at both the Estonian and European levels since 1996. This experience has highlighted the need to gain a deeper understanding of young people’s perceived needs in order to further develop existing support options.

Supporting young people is no longer limited to education and the labour market but involves a broader ecosystem that connects social welfare, youth work, healthcare, community services, and public sector management. As young people’s life situations are multifaceted, effective support requires cross-sectoral policy coordination, flexible institutional collaboration practices, and a value-based approach. Policymaking for youth has become increasingly complex, as responsibility is shared across multiple sectors and across national, regional and local levels. Furthermore, young people themselves are increasingly seen as active participants in service and policy creation.

Therefore, the aims of my doctoral thesis are to develop an evidence-based model for public sector policymaking when working with young people who are not in education, employment or training. This should enable the development of policies based on the perceived needs of young people, increase their inclusion in society, and support both short- and long-term coping.

In my thesis, policymaking was analysed primarily through the principles of new public governance, including **social innovation** and intervention through the **concepts of vulnerability, well-being, and social inclusion** and, together with co-authors, five studies were conducted. Methodologically, **Study I** is based on a thematic analysis of documents and semi-structured interviews, **Study II** collected data through a public online platform and analysed it using the scientific realist review methodology, **Study III** used a systematic review methodology, **Study IV** employed an action research approach, collecting data through an anonymous qualitative online questionnaire, and **Study V** involved a thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews.

My doctoral study shows that when policymakers lack a shared understanding of the nature of the problem, support measures for young people tend to be designed along sectoral lines. **Clear role** definitions and **common coordination** make it possible to reach and support more young people. Rational top-down policy design alone is insufficient, as it overlooks the diversity of young people’s lived experiences and constrains **cross-sectoral collaboration** and local relevance. **Adopting a social innovation approach** in policymaking therefore enables more flexible, creative, and effective responses to young people challenges.

This calls for a shift from an economically driven perspective towards a **youth-centred approach** that enables co-creation, helps avoid stigmatisation, and strengthens the local relevance of solutions.

The research also identified mismatches between young people's perceived needs and the objectives of existing support services, highlighting the need for systematic coordination across education, social work, youth work, healthcare, career and employment sectors. Effective support for young people requires diverse and adaptable solutions throughout the **entire support pathway**, from prevention to service delivery. **Young people should be treated as partners** and co-creators rather than as passive recipients of services. Accordingly, they need to be recognised as integral actors in policy and service design, as treating young people as a homogeneous group obscures important differences and hinders the development of effective interventions.

Therefore, my doctoral thesis confirmed that **young people's life** situations and **how they cope with them vary**. Finding solutions to their needs must be enabled through **cooperation between different fields** and should be seen as a constantly evolving and **dynamic ecosystem**, where political agreements and development work at different levels take place primarily through the **development of cooperative relationships**. The key to effectively supporting youth lies in offering **comprehensive and flexible** services in a caring environment, improving young people's well-being so that before transitioning into employment, they **feel valued and confident**, have developed or strengthened their competencies and connections with others, and feel a sense of belonging in their community. Also, my doctoral thesis contributed to the understanding that, in order to create an effective youth policy and support young people, it is important to consider that goal setting is based **equally on the perceived needs** of the target group and **societal expectations**. Such an approach can improve how the target group **cope on a daily basis and long term** as well as **improving their general well-being**. However, in practice, this requires a fundamental shift in the traditional paradigms of policymaking regarding goals **and people-centred support**. To achieve this, there is a need to change **how we define effective or efficient support** for young people. While the current understanding has been that effectiveness is more of an economic criterion, this thesis suggests that there is a need to focus more on the provision of support that is **appropriate to the young person's self-perceived needs**, increasing the likelihood of sustainable outcomes (e.g., studying and working).

As the result of the doctoral thesis, I proposed the **model of equisupport** (*toeðiglus*) where we acknowledge that each young person's **path, challenges, and strengths are unique**. The word is created based on the nature of the approach, where young people have **equal** opportunity to participate in the creation of solutions and policies, as well as **equity** and justifiable solutions. Instead of offering the same assistance to everyone, we tailor our support to meet each individual's specific circumstances and needs. The main activities of the principle are to identify the individual needs and strengths of each young person, provide needs-based (indicated) support, and continuously evaluate the impact

towards achieving justified support. Therefore, the model of equisupport focuses on helping youth **exit their disadvantaged situation before entering education or the labour market** and avoiding solution decisions that the young person may not yet be ready for.

Based on this new approach, I also propose an additional concept for policy use, **Young person in Education or Employment Transitions (YET)**, to describe young people who are temporarily not engaged in education or the labour market due to their current life situation, but whose circumstances could improve to enable re-engagement in education, work or other self-fulfilling activities. While the acronym NEET has provided an important statistical and policy framework, it was developed primarily to describe labour market attachment at a given point in time and an additional concept helps shift the focus more **from a static status to a transitional pathway**, emphasising the situational and **temporary nature** of vulnerability and framing support as a developmental process. This term also ensures **equal treatment** for young people who, for example, may be unable to enter the open labour market due to health reasons but nevertheless wish to fulfil their potential.

Therefore, the findings of this doctoral thesis suggest that in developing a political approach aimed at supporting **Young people who are in Education or Employment Transitions**, it is crucial to acknowledge that effective support starts from an inclusive and approach in ecosystem grounded in **equal opportunity and equity**.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Policy recommendations

Below, I present policy recommendations for implementing the concept of equisupport in working with young people. The recommendations are connected and work in combination (see Figure 9).

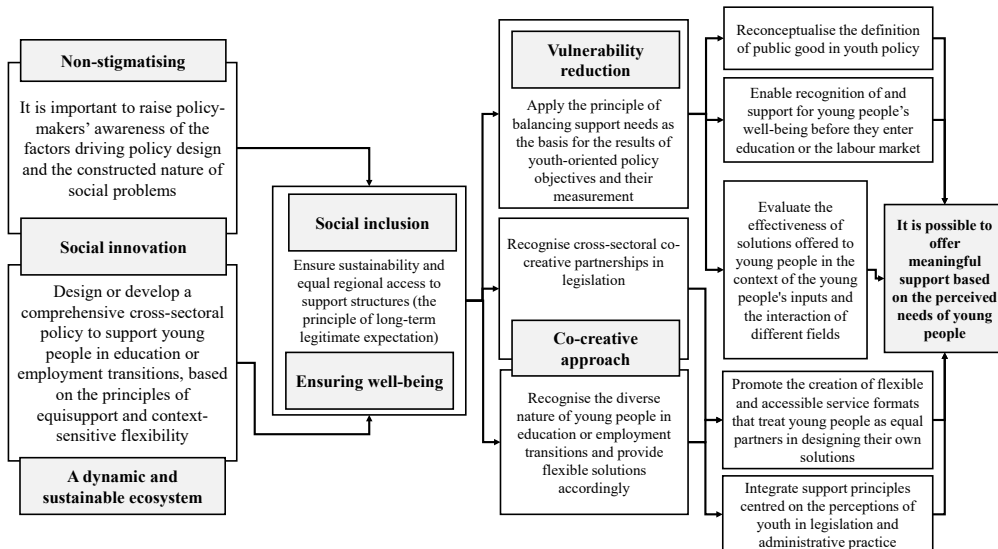


Figure 9. Policy recommendations based on the framework of equisupport with the theoretical framework and interactions between the principles

- I. **It is important to raise the awareness of policymakers of the factors driving policy design and the constructed nature of social problems.** When designing policy measures, services that may pressure youth to make decisions that are not within their reach must be avoided, while finding solutions that are personalised and flexible over time.
- II. **Design or develop a comprehensive cross-sectoral policy to support young people in education or employment transitions, based on the principles of equisupport and context-sensitive flexibility.** An interdisciplinary agreement created or developed for young people must be prepared in cooperation with both young people themselves and the local ecosystem, based on the perceived needs of young people and broader social expectations. Above all, a political agreement must enable long-term, systematic, location- and context-based flexible solutions that do not label young people. In accordance with this principle, we recognise that every young person's journey, challenges, and strengths are and can be unique, and we can tailor our support to each individual's specific circumstances, needs, and abilities.

- III. **Ensure sustainability and equal regional access to support structures (the principle of long-term legitimate expectation).** Youth support cannot depend on the region, temporary projects or programmes. Public services must be sustainable and consistent, responding to young people's expectation not to be left without help/support in vulnerable situations. Project-based approaches must be balanced with systemic public solutions that ensure long-term support.
- IV. **Apply the principle of balancing the need for support as the basis for the results of youth-oriented policy objectives and their measurement.** To ensure effectiveness and sustainability, the balance between young people's self-perceived needs and the overall objectives of public policy (e.g., a swift return to education or the labour market) must be considered. Respecting young people's readiness and supporting them according to their needs reduces the risk of returning to a vulnerable status and the resulting social exclusion.
- V. **Recognise cross-sectoral co-creative partnerships in legislation.** Implementing social innovation requires formal legislative changes and clear cooperation formats between service providers and youth. Synergy between the fields of education, social work, youth work, employment, integration, health, and internal security allows for more effective and coordinated support for young people in education or employment transitions.
- VI. **Recognise the diverse nature of young people in education or employment transitions and provide flexible solutions accordingly.** Young people need an individual and context-sensitive approach. A functioning solution requires a constantly evolving ecosystem that works together in a coordinated and coherent manner.
- VII. **Reconceptualise the definition of public good in youth policy.** The definition of public good needs to shift the focus from economic efficiency to personal needs. The measure of a successful policy should be the extent to which the support provided matches the young person's own perceived needs and contributes to their long-term self-realisation and participation in society.
- VIII. **Enable recognition of and support for young people's well-being before they enter education or the labour market.** The focus should be on improving young people's well-being and self-confidence before transitioning into employment, education or other self-fulfilling activities. Above all, safe and time-saving learning environments are needed that allow young people to acquire, for example, social skills and develop career readiness.
- IX. **Evaluate the effectiveness of solutions offered to young people in the context of the young people's inputs and the interaction of different fields.** In determining the quality and suitability of policy measures, it is essential to consider both the assessments of the young people themselves and the interplay between various sectors. Considering young

people's experience (e.g., exiting disadvantaged situations) and highlighting the dimension created through intersectoral cooperation as one indicator of policy or intervention success helps avoid systemic blind spots and shortcomings and supports more effective policy implementation.

- X. **Promote the creation of flexible and accessible service formats that treat young people as equal partners in designing their own solutions.** Approaches based on the needs of young people and implemented in cooperation between different sectors and fields help prevent the marginalisation of young people. Solutions offered to young people must be flexible, needs- and context-based, with the young person at the centre as an active co-thinker and decision-maker.
- XI. **Integrate the following support principles centred on the perceptions of youth within legislation and administrative practice:**
 - a. **Co-creation and reciprocal partnership** – interventions must be based on equality and co-creation, involving the youth in designing solutions guided by their personal needs.
 - b. **Situation-based communication** – youth must not be defined by the problem; the focus should be on their situation, not the person.
 - c. **Meaningfulness** – support must be provided in a trusting, safe and caring environment; an approach focusing on the young person's strengths helps improve their self-esteem and increases the possibility of change.
 - d. **The influence of the immediate network** – it is also important to consider the impact of the young person's immediate network and provide support to the community around them.
 - e. **One-stop management** – young people access services that meet their needs, regardless of the first service (stop) they enter. Also, where required, empowering the young person through a single key confidant, with the process manager themselves liaising with other service providers to ensure seamless support.
 - f. **Minimal information flow** – the information required to support the young person should be exchanged with their consent, and they must not be pressured to share information before they are ready.

Additional recommendations for Estonian policymakers in English

The doctoral thesis confirmed that the use of a social innovation approach in the creation of policies aimed at young people and in the implementation of related activities is taking root in Estonia. In Estonia, the development and implementation of youth-oriented policies are positively influenced by an understanding of the need for a cross-sectoral approach and a shared desire to empower young people, a strong youth support ecosystem, and the digital state's ability to learn

about young people and their concerns. At the same time, the fragmentation of responsibility for supporting children and young people, the time-critical nature of legislation, the project-based nature of support activities (short-term funding), a public sector that is still rather risk-averse (e.g., rethinking performance, shaping joint legislation from the outset) and reliance on standard solutions, and the lack of meaningful involvement of young people in their own support or in policymaking more broadly. In addition, there are significant untapped opportunities at the local level in Estonia (e.g., non-governmental organizations, social enterprises) that are ready to experiment with flexible, community-based, and trust-based solutions. In order to implement social innovation more deeply in Estonia, there is a need to rethink management culture, funding logic, language use, support methodology, and the possibility of implementing various activities in combination. The possibility of creating change must be centred on cross-disciplinary learning, flexibility in the support solutions offered, and the recognition of young people as equal partners.

To achieve this shift, emphasis needs to be placed on policymaking:

- I. in **process management**, shift the focus from forecasting to learning (**learning policy**), where policymakers can create the preconditions for experimentation, adaptation, and learning;
- II. in **planning**, shift the focus from a **one-off decision-making process to a policy cycle approach**, allowing experimentation (learning policy) to be treated as part of policy development in order to create more suitable approaches through continuous learning experience;
- III. in **lawmaking**, shift the focus from **precise prescriptions to the creation of general frameworks**, where instead of detailed prescriptions, legal frameworks are created that allow for flexible case management and co-operation across institutions and sectors;
- IV. in **measuring results**, shift the focus **from participation to creating lasting change** for young people, which requires a focus on developmental models and, in addition to numerical indicators (e.g., participation and specific outcome rates), also assesses, for example, the testing of new measures and their suitability for the needs of young people (including an increase in coping skills and willingness to participate in services);
- V. in **upgrading the competencies** of officials, shift the focus from **administration to the development** of effective solutions so that policymakers and implementers can acquire skills in open government co-creation and service design in addition to legal and administrative competencies;
- VI. when **implementing support activities**, shift the focus from a **project-based approach to a learning development** programme approach, which allows for testing time-bound, but sustainable solutions aimed at designing, testing, and adapting activities (elements) together with the ecosystem, and in which the experiential and evidence-based knowledge gathered from young people forms the basis for further development and expansion. Young people participating in this process must be aware of its objectives and

temporary nature and must not be left without the necessary support after the end of the development programme;

- VII. **rethinking roles**, shifting the focus from young people **as clients to equal partners**, where young people are treated not as objects of policy, but as co-creators and bearers of expert knowledge (this requires the conscious sharing of decision-making power and responsibility);
- VIII. when **supporting young people**, shifting the focus from the provision of **separate services to a long-term goal**, which makes it possible to avoid a situation where young people go through the services but do not actually move towards their long-term goal. The service becomes an enabling tool, not a goal in itself;
- IX. therefore, **rethinking case management**, shifting the focus from a **service as a fixed linear package to a combinable whole**, where young people can understand their different needs for assistance/support and choose support as modules or elements, arrange them and change them over time according to the situation;
- X. including rethinking case management, where the focus is shifted from **multiple process managers to a single responsible contact or trusted person**, which allows the (service) modules chosen by the young person to be coordinated across agencies, the support pathway to be adjusted on an ongoing basis, and frees the young person from the need to know and be able to navigate the system themselves;
- XI. rethinking **entry** into and **exit from the service**, shifting the focus from each **individual service to a combined approach**, where young people can start with any module that meets their current needs (e.g., mental health, housing stability, social skills, work experience and practice, returning to formal education, etc.) and discontinuing one module/element (e.g., ending unemployment status) does not mean the end of all support, but rather the opportunity to make new choices (informing them of other options);
- XII. changing or **rethinking the expressions/communications** used, because the use of language/expressions in politics is not neutral, but determines what is considered possible, measurable, and legal (see Table 1).

Table 1. Overview of expressions used in policies aimed at young people in educational and career transitions, and recommendations for changing or interpreting them

In use	Recommendation for use	The core of change
Cooperation	Co-creation, interaction	The process begins with jointly defining the problem to be solved, roles, and responsibilities, which allows for more appropriate support for young people and shared resources.
Efficient measure	Effective solution for young people with lasting impact	The solution can be context-based and focus on lasting impact in addition to participation/instant achievements.
Feedback	Experiential knowledge	Allows young people's experience to be treated as input for service or policymaking, which brings the need to continuously collect young people's experiential knowledge (input) into the focus of solution-providing activities.
Helping, supporting	Empowerment	Focus on internal resources.
Implementation	Launch, customization, testing, experimenting	Allows policy implementation to be approached on the principle that it is not predictable and not repeated in the same way in every context, create space for new solutions (evidence-generating).
Impact and feasibility analysis	Continuous consideration of experiential knowledge	Allows you to gather the necessary learning experience through various outputs in cooperation with the ecosystem.
NEET – young people not in education, employment or training	YET – Young people in Education and Employment Transitions	Highlights the young person's current life situation or other circumstances that keep them from being active, and the alleviation or resolution of which creates the prerequisites for further movement into education, the labour market, or other self-fulfilling activities.
Non-active young person	Young people of varying readiness	Focus is on the young person's actual readiness and ability.
Intervention output	Empowerment development journey	Possible to assess the developmental perspective of the young person.

In use	Recommendation for use	The core of change
Participatory	Co-design	Allows for shared decision-making and responsibility, also to decide on the content of the service, the necessary resource allocations, and more broadly the content of the policy.
Parties, agencies, institutions	Ecosystem	Allows to see the network of institutions around the young person as a constantly renewing network.
Policymaking	Learning politics	Allows you to incorporate ecosystem experience and see the process as cyclical, resulting in solutions that work at that moment in time.
Service, support measure, support activity, supportive activity, intervention	Service as an element/module based on the young person's individual need, the selection of which is based on its function in achieving the young person's long-term goal	Allows for focus from service to purpose, why they receive it. The system adapts to the needs and goals of the young person and reduces the young person's feeling of failure in situations where the service does not work. Allows better combination and flexibility of cross-sectoral support (modules, elements). The service is not a finished product, allowing for support flexibility.
Standard solution	A personally customisable solution	Allows for a different approach based on the needs of young people.
Target group	Young experts	Treating young people as experts in their own lives and as equal partners in policy-making and support.

Recommendations for research

As the policy landscape targeting young people in NEET situations is constantly evolving, there is a need for continuous monitoring of the existing system to create a foundation for further development activities. This is especially important for identifying young people's needs more accurately and providing more effective support.

Proposed Areas for Further Research Based on the Findings of the Doctoral Thesis:

- I. Enhanced profiling of young people based on the principle of needs-based rebalancing with the aim of improving the precision of service referrals and outreach by aligning interventions more closely with the self-perceived needs of young individuals, thereby increasing the likelihood of sustained and meaningful outcomes.
- II. Identification of protective and motivational factors that contribute to prolonged engagement of young people in NEET situations with support services.
- III. Design and implementation of interventions grounded in the principles of meaning-oriented change management, focusing on transformative support approaches that resonate with the lived experiences and aspirations of young people.
- IV. Exploration of the legislative potential of the “one-door-shop and one-door change management” principle, particularly in establishing more coherent and accessible service pathways.
- V. Conceptualisation of essential data requirements informed by the principle of minimal information flow, to enable effective cross-sectoral and inter-programmatic support mechanisms while maintaining respect for privacy and data minimisation.

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*Trauma ei tähenda paha laps. Tuleb vaadata, mis kapis peidus on.
Hirm, agressiivsus, trauma mõjul käitumine: äkki täna tuleb jälle kõmakas?
Keegi sutsab ja juba plahvatab. Meie näeme vaid plahvatust, aga nemad
tahavad jääda ellu. Kui me räägime nendel teemadel, mis võivad olla nende
[NEET-olukorras noored] tagamaad, siis ma usun, et ühiskond hakkab ka seda
muutma. Peaksime kajastama positiivseid külgi noortest.
(Noortega töötav spetsialist)*

SUMMARY IN ESTONIAN

Toeõigluse mudel avaliku sektori poliitikate kujundamiseks töötamisel noortega, kes on haridus- ja tööalastes üleminekutes

Minu doktoritöö keskmes on noored, kes on erinevatel põhjustel sattunud ebasoodsasse olukorda ega osale seetõttu hariduses või tööhõives. Otsin vastust, kuidas paremini vastata noorte tegelikele ootustele ja vajadustele, et nad jõuaksid tagasi haridusse ja tööturule. Doktoritöö on osaliselt autoetnograafiliste sugemetega, kuna olen teemaga professionaalselt seotud.

Tänapäeval ei piirdu noorte toetamine üksnes tööturu ja hariduse valdkonnaga, vaid hõlmab laiemat ökosüsteemi, kus põimuvad sotsiaalhoolekanne, noorsootöö, tervishoid, kogukonnateenused ja avaliku sektori juhtimispraktikad. Kuna noorte olukorrad on erinevad, eeldab nende murede lahendamine poliitikate koostoime, professionaalsete võrgustike ja praktikate koostööd ning noorte tajutud vajaduste mõistmist. Noori toetava poliitika mõjususe mõõdetakse selle koordineeritusest, paindlikkusest ja väärtuspõhisusest.

Minu doktoritöö eesmärk on välja töötada tõendus põhine mudel, mis aitab avalikul sektoril kujundada poliitikaid töötamisel noortega, kes ei õpi ega tööta, et leida parimad lahendusviisid nende ebasoodsast olukorrast väljumiseks. Mudel peab aitama kujundada poliitikaid, mis arvestavad noorte vajadusi, suurendavad nende ühiskonda kaasatust ja toetavad nii lühi- kui ka pikaajalist toimetulekut.

Noorte kirjeldamisel on poliitikaloomes rahvusvaheliselt kasutusel akronüüm NEET, mis tuleneb ingliskeelsest väljendist “*not in education, employment or training*”⁹, ja tähistab 15–29-aastast **mitteõppivat ja -töötavat noort**, kes ei osale ka koolitusel (Mascherini jt, 2012). Euroopa Liidu liikmesriikidele antud suuniste järgi on lähiaastate eesmärgiks vähendada NEET-olukorras noorte osakaalu 9%-le (Euroopa Komisjon, 2020). 2024. aasta seisuga oli see osakaal Eestis 11% (Eesti Statistikaamet, 2025). Noorte toetamiseks julgustatakse liikmesriike rakendama **noortegarantii algatust**, mille toel leiaksid alla 30-aastased noored kvaliteetse töökohta, jätkaksid oma haridust või saaksid nelja kuu jooksul pärast koolist lahkumist või töötuks jäämist juurdepääsu õpipoisi- või praktikakohale

⁹ Ei osale hariduses, tööturul ega koolitusel

(Euroopa Komisjon, 2020). Doktoritöös analüüsisin noortele suunatud poliitika-kujundust uue avaliku valitsemise põhimõtete sealhulgas **sotsiaalse innovatsiooni** kaudu ning sekkumiste kujundamist haavatavuse, heaolu, sotsiaalse tõrjutuse ja kaasatuse käsitluste raames. Oma töös pean oluliseks riikliku, regionaalse, kohaliku kui ka kogukondliku tasandi kokkutoomist, et noorteni jõudmine ja nende toetamine toimiks terviküsteemina. Kokku viisin koos kaasautoritega läbi **viis eraldiseisvat uuringut**.

Uuringus I kasutasime dokumentide ja poolstruktureeritud intervjuude temaatilist analüüsi, et mõista, kuidas Eestis NEET-olukorras noortega töötavad **spetsialistid tõlgendavad avaliku sektori toetussüsteeme** ja mis asjaolud mõjutasid noortegarantii esimese perioodi poliitiliste eesmärkide saavutamist. Uuringust selgus, et poliitikakujundajatel ja noortega töötavatel spetsialistidel **puudus ühine arusaam peamistest probleemidest ja sihtidest**. Toetusmeetmed loodi pigem ühe valdkonna sees, mitte tervikliku ja valdkondadeülese süsteemina. **Uuring I** tõi välja, et noortegarantii esimesel perioodil jäi vajaka ühtsest **sektoriteülesest koordineerimisest**. Koostoimimine võimaldab paremat teavitustööd ja integreeritud teenuseid kohalikul tasandil. Ühtse sektoriteülese poliitikaraamistiku ja koordineerimise kaudu saab õiguspäraselt tuge pakkuda väga erineva taustaga noortele vastavalt nende vajadustele. Uuring näitas, et valdkondade täpsemalt määratletud funktsioonid võimaldavad jõuda laiema noorte sihtrühmani, kuna erinevate sektorite suuniseid saab koordineerida kokkulepitud tugisüsteemi alusel. Nii ei ole noorte toetamine killustatud ja neile on võimalik kohalikul tasandil pakkuda vajaduspõhiseid ja mittersildistavaid toetavaid teenuseid. Uuring kinnitas, et erinevate valdkondade suunised peavad olema teadlikult kooskõlastatud **tulemuslikkuse tähenduse** osas. Kui tulemuslikkuse kriteeriumid ei ole omavahel võrreldavad, **võib see viia** poliitikakujundamisel valede **järeldusteni tugisüsteemide tõhususest** ja seega ebavõrdse kohtlemiseni. Uuring näitas, et võrreldavad mõõdikud aitavad valdkondade potentsiaali ja ühismõju paremini esile tuua ja toetada uute vajaduspõhiste sekkumiste teket.

Uringu II keskmes oli sotsiaalse innovatsiooni roll noortegarantii sekkumistes Euroopa riikides. Eesmärk oli mõista, kas ja kuidas sotsiaalne innovatsioon toetab haavatavate noorte ligipääsu haridusele ja tööturule. Noortele suunatud sekkumised kogusime Euroopa Komisjoni veebiplatvormilt ning analüüsisime neid realistliku hindamise teadusmetoodika alusel. Uuring kinnitas, et sotsiaalse innovatsiooni lähenemise kasutamine noortega seotud poliitikaloomes omab suurt potentsiaali ja võimaldab pakkuda sotsiaalsetele probleemidele uenduslikke lahendusi. **Tuvastasime viis peamist dimensiooni, mille kaudu tõlgendada** sotsiaalset innovatsiooni NEET-olukorras noorte toetamisel. **Poliitilist sekkumist** (1) tuleb näha kui lahendust ühiskondlikele probleemidele, kus näiteks avaliku ja erasektori partnerlus ja töökorralduslikud muudatused noorte tugisüsteemides vähendavad tööturubarjääre, millega noored koolist tööturule siirdudes silmitsi seisavad. Tähelepanu keskmes peavad olema muutused arusaamades, koostöösuhetes ja töömeetodites. **Kasumile orienteeritust** (2) tuleb sotsiaalprogrammides tõlgendada pigem ühiskondliku kasu pakkumise ja noorte igapäevase toimetuleku parandamisena. Kuigi sekkumiste eesmärk on noori

toetada haridusse või tööturule jõudmisel, tuleb neid püsiva tulemuse saavutamiseks esmalt võimestada ja keskenduda nende heaolu taastamisele. Vastasel juhul ei puugi tulemus olla püsiv. **Geograafiline korratavus** (3) viitab sotsiaalse innovatsiooni rakendamisele erinevates piirkondades. See tähendab sekkumiste elluviimisel pidevat eksperimenteerimist ja õpikogemuse analüüsi, et arendada ja laiendada loodud sekkumisi teistesse sarnaste sotsiaalsete probleemidega piirkondadesse. **Organisatsiooni juhtimise** (4) puhul tuleb lähtuda alt üles põhimõttest, mis võimaldab arvestada kohaliku tasandi probleemide, seotud noorte ning ökosüsteemi ekspertiisi. **Alt üles lähenemise** puhul on omakorda tegemist **sotsiaalse kaasatuse** (5) põhimõtte järgimisega, mis tähendab noorte protsessi kaasamist. See omakorda võimestab ühiskonda laiemalt, sest võimaldab ebasoodsas olukorras olevatel noortel ressursidele ligi pääseda ja oma vajadusi väljendada. Sotsiaalse innovatsiooni rakendamine eeldab muutust **harjumuspärastes juhtimismudelites** ja uute teadmiste lõimimist avaliku sektori poliitikaloomesse. Samas aitab see lähenemine pakkuda noore vajadustele paremini vastavat tuge, suurendades seeläbi ühiskondlikku mõju.

Uuringus III kasutasime süstemaatilise ülevaate metoodikat (*systematic review methodology*), et **kaardistada** teaduspõhised poliitikasoovitused NEET-olukorras noorte toetamiseks teadusartiklites, mis ilmusid perioodil 2013–2021. Uuring tõi välja viis põhiteemat: (1) **NEET mõiste**; (2) sihtrühma **heterogeensus**; (3) **struktuuride ja poliitikate mõju noortele**; (4) **võimalikud sekkumised** ja (5) **noorte toimetulekut kujundavad tegurid**. Uuringust selgus, et noorte võimalused tuge saada on Euroopas erinevad ning riiklike tugisüsteemide ja -struktuuride ühetaolisus ei ole iseenesestmõistetav. **Sarnane sotsiaalne rühm võib vajada erinevaid lähenemisviise** ka sama riigi eri piirkondades.

Uuring tõi selgelt esile, et NEET-olukorras noorte käsitus noortegarantiiga seotud tugiteenustes on sageli liiga homogeenne, mis eirab noorte mitmekesisust. See omakorda mõjutab poliitilisi kaalutlusi noorte toetamise kujundamisel. Uuring kinnitas, et sarnaste riskifaktoritega noored võivad vajada **erinevat lähenemist** ja noorte toetamine **ei tohi piirduda üksnes nende tööturule või haridusse suunamisega**. Uuring kinnitas, et teatud lahendusi vajavate noorte puhul (nt tervisepiirangud) on mitmes riigis NEET-staatuse saamine sageli ainus võimalus saada vajalikku tuge ja stabiilsust (nt eeltegevused hõivesse jõudmiseks ja tööl püsimiseks). Teenuse või toe saamise eeltingimused piiravad teiste sisenemist. Seega on poliitikakujundajate jaoks tähtis **teadvustada noorte heterogeensus** ja sellesse **olukorda** sattumise **põhjuseid**, sest see võimaldab välja töötada **kohandatud meetmed, mis vastavad** erinevas olukorras noorte vajadustele. Kohandatud meetmed ja teenused peavad olema kavandatud nii, et need arvestaksid lisaks noorte **individuaalsetele vajadustele** ka **kohaliku konteksti eripära** (sh maa- ja linnapiirkonnad), sealhulgas regionaalsete poliitikate vastastikust mõju. Seega peab riik looma õigusliku raamistiku, mis võimaldab **valdkondadevahelist koostööd noorte mitmetahuliste vajaduste rahuldamiseks**. Noorte toetamisel on vajalik koostöö hariduse, noorsootöö, sotsiaaltöö, kultuuri, tööhõive, siseturvalisuse ja tervishoiu valdkondade vahel. Uuring kinnitas, et noorte toetamine peab eelkõige toimuma **hoolivas keskkonnas**, kus keskendutakse

usalduse loomisele ja **enesekindluse** kasvatamisele. Tõhus sekkumine põhineb **isiklikel** huvidel, **karjäärialasel arengul** ja **sotsiaalsel kuuluvusel**. Eelkõige on vaja **täendusrikkaid suhteid loovaid** lähenemisi. Poliitikaloomes tuleb arvestada, et noored ei ole passiivsed abisaajad, vaid aktiivsed osalejad oma elus ja arengus.

Uuringu IV eesmärk oli mõista **sotsiaalsete probleemide mitmemõõtmelisust** noorte puhul, kes ei õpi ega tööta, kaardistada nende ümber kujunev peamine ökosüsteem ning analüüsida erinevaid poliitikakujundamise võimalusi. Analüüsisime ka disainimõtlemise lähenemisviisi võimalusi uute toetusformaatide loomisel. Kasutasime tegevusuuringut ning kogusime COST-võrgustiku liikmetelt veebiküsimustikuga andmeid noortegarantiiga seotud tegevuste andmeid eri riikides. Uuring kinnitas, et poliitikates valdavalt rakendatav ratsionaalne poliitikakujundamise lähenemine ei ole heterogeense sihtrühma puhul piisav, kuna see ei arvesta sotsiaalsete probleemide mitmekesisust. Noorte käsitlemine peamiselt tööturuindikaatorina võib jätta tähelepanuta nende tegelikud vajadused. Noortele suunatud poliitikakujundamisel tuleb liikuda **majanduskesksest lähenemisest noortekesksele**, vältides sellega ka noorte stigmatiseerimist ning võimaldades neil kaasa rääkida lahenduste loomises. Uuring kinnitas, et kuigi **poliitikaloomes protsessis** osalevad mitmed sidusrühmad, nagu ministriumid, tööturuasutused, omavalitsused ja vähesel määral kolmas sektor, **jäävad noored ise siiski enamjaolt kõrvale**. Pigem domineerib tsentraliseeritud juhtimine, mis piirab valdkondadevahelist koostööd ja kohaliku konteksti arvestamist. Uuringus analüüsisime ka **Eesti uuendatud noortegarantii tegevuskava 2022–2027** ühte alasuunda¹⁰. Eesti näite puhul rakendati sotsiaalse innovatsiooni lähenemist, mille keskmeks oli disainimõtlemine. Tegevusuuring kinnitas, et disainimõtlemisele omase laiema ökosüsteemi (sh noored ise) kaasamisel on suur potentsiaal luua poliitikaid, mis vastavad paremini noorte vajadustele. See võimaldas mõista noorte ümber toimiva **ökosüsteemi tegelikkust** ja nende vajadusi ning aitas esile tuua seotud osapoolte ühised väärtused ja arusaamad, arvestades samal ajal noorte peamisi toimetulekumehhanisme. Tulemuseks oli **mitmekesiste arvamuste kaudu sobilikemate lahenduste loomine**. Samal ajal nõudis disainimõtlemine tavapärasemast **keerukamat juhtimist**, sest valikute tegemisel oli vajalik sidusrühmade konsensus. Disainiprotsess ei ole lineaarne, vaid **nõuab pidevat kohandumist**. Selline lähenemine andis poliitikale **kohese rakendatavuse**, sest kaasatud osapooled tundsid end **protsessi osalistena**, ja aitas ennetada võimalikke juriidilisi riske (andmete vahetus, suunamised jmt). Koostöö tõi selguse osapoolte vajadustes, pädevustes ja võimalikes ressursides. Eestis välja **tõttatud disainiprotsessi poliitikakujundamisel saab kohandada ka teiste riikide jaoks**. Oluline on protsessiga seotud institutsioonide avatud hoiak ja sektoritevaheline koostöö.

¹⁰ Riikliku koostööraamistiku “Valdkondadeüleline NEET-olukorras noorte toetamise ja teenuste koostöömudel kohalikele omavalitsustele” loomine ja selle alusel Majandus- ja Kommunikatsiooniministeeriumi kujundatud taotlusvoor “Kõrge noorte tööhõive saavutamine ja toetamine”.

Uuring V tugines poolstruktureeritud intervjuudele nii noorte kui neid toetavate spetsialistidega, et mõista **NEET-olukorras noorte poolt tunnetatud toetusvajadusi** ja hinnata **valdkondade ja seotud asutuste võimalusi nende toetamisel**. Uuring kinnitas vastuolusid noorte tunnetatud vajaduste ja pakutavate teenuste vahel, rõhutades süsteemsete kokkulepete vajadust hariduse, sotsiaaltöö, noorsootöö, tervise, tööhõive ja karjääri valdkonnas. Noorte toetamiseks tuleb rakendada **mitmekesiseid ja paindlikke meetodikaid kogu toetamise protsessi vältel** ennetusest kuni teenustest väljumiseni. Mõistmaks noorte erinevaid eluolukordi, algab efektiivne tugi **võrdsest partnerlusest**. Noori tuleb näha eelkõige **koostööpartnerite, mitte teenuste tarbijatena**.

Uuring kinnitas, et NEET-olukorras noored **tunnevad** end tihti **lähikukkununa**, ühiskonna silmis süüdi ja asendatavatena, mis **takistab neil abi vastu võtmast**. Uuring rõhutas ka **tähendusliku, usaldusliku ja tugevustele keskenduva paindliku toe** olulisust, mis peab toimuma eelkõige **mitteformaalses ja turvalises** keskkonnas. Lisaks noorele endale tuleb toetada ka tema **lähivõrgustikku**, sest see mõjutab tugevalt noore motivatsiooni teenuses püsida ning teisi tema otsuseid ja võimalusi. Uuring aitas mõista, et praegune **killustatud teenusüsteem erinevate osapooltega** võib noortel **tekitada soovi teenusest loobuda**, samuti on oluline vältida info korduvat küsimist ja **toetada noort** tema enda **otsustusvõime tugevdamisel**. Uuring tõi ka esile vajaduse **minimeerida andmevahetust** spetsialistide vahel enne usaldusliku suhte tekkimist, kuna teenused peavad toetama noort tema tempos. Toetamine peab lähtuma põhimõttest, et **muutuse saab algatada vaid noor ise** ja see saab alguse, kui noor tunneb, et tal on kontroll oma elu üle. Uuring tõi ka välja, et spetsialistid tunnevad tihti eetilist dilemmat, sest suuniste ja **mõõdikute surve sunnib neid** noori **liiga kiiresti järgmisse etappi suunama**. See võib viia noore ebasobivate valikute tegemiseni või **teenuse katkestamiseni**. Noorte toetamine peab põhinema pigem **tasakaalustatud** ootustel, kus **võrdse kaaluga** on noore esmased heaoluga seotud **lahendusvajadused** ja sekkumise/teenusega seotud **poliitilised eesmärgid**. Tuleb arvestada, et noortele loodavad teenused peavad olema jätkusuutlikud ja järjepidevad, et noori ei jäeta haavatavas olukorras abita/toeta. Uuringu tulemusel kujundati **seitse peamist printsiipi noorte** tulemuslikumaks toetamiseks, millega tuleb noorte sekkumiste kujundamisel või toetamisel arvestada (koosloome ja vastastikune partnerlus, olukorrapõhine kommunikatsioon, tähenduslikkus, ühe ukse muutuste juhtimine, minimaalne teabevoog, lahendusvajaduste tasakaalustatus ja pikaajaline õigustatud ootus)¹¹.

Doktoritöö viis uuringut kinnitavad varasemat teadmist, et noorte, kes ei õpi ega tööta, elusituatsioonid ja nendega toimetulek on erinevad. Noorte abivajaduste mitmekesisuse tõttu ei saa vajalikku tuge pakkuda ühe valdkonna sees. Noorte toetamine peab olema võimaldatud eelkõige hariduse, sotsiaaltöö, noorsootöö, tööhõive, karjääri, lõimimise, tervise ja siseturvalisuse koostoimes ning seda tuleb näha kui **pidevalt uuenevat ja dünaamilist ökosüsteemi**, kus

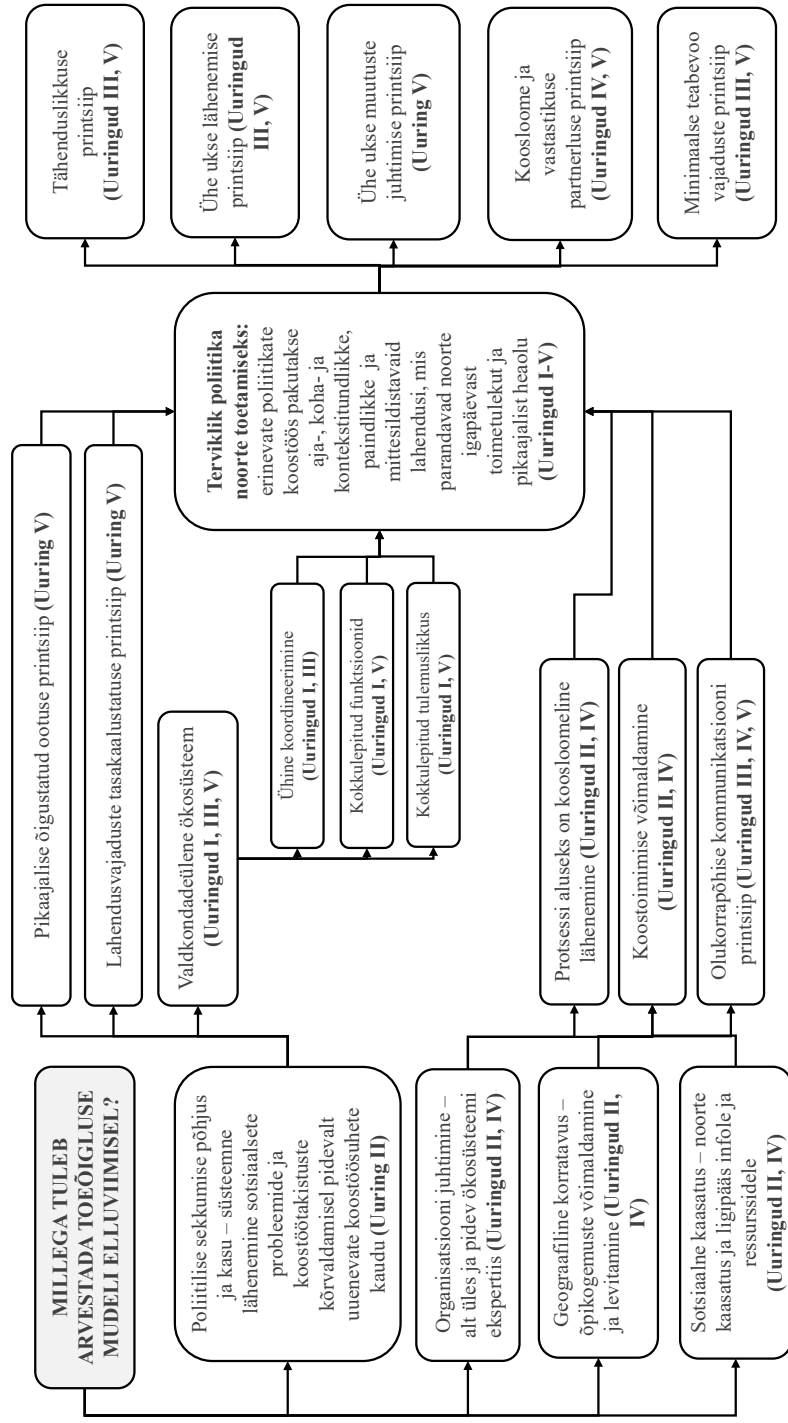
¹¹ Printsiipide täpsemad definitsioonid on leitavad peatüki lõpus olevast Terminid osast.

erinevate tasandite poliitilised ja institutsionaalsed raamistikud arenevad eelkõige koostöös.

Doktoritöö näitas, et noorte võimestamiseks on parim pakkuda **terviklikke ja paindlikke tegevusi ja teenuseid hoolivas keskkonnas**. See peaks parandama noorte heaolu ja aitama neil enne tööturule sisenemist tunda end väärtusliku, enesekindla ja kogukonnaga seotuna. Uues mudelis tuleb ühendada lähenemised, mis arvestavad noore huve ja toetavad tööharjumuste, meeskonnatöö, enesekindluse ja karjäärieesmärkide arengut. Samuti on oluline lõimida noored haridussüsteemi, soodustada nende sisenemist tööturule ning suurendada sotsiaalset kaasatust. Töö näitas, et NEET-olukorras noortele suunatud poliitika kujundamisel tuleb arvestada, et tõhusaks toetamiseks on vaja lähenemist, mis põhineb **võrdselt noorte tajutud vajadustel ja ühiskonna ootustel**. Seetõttu tuleb sekkumiste tulemuslikkust hinnata eelkõige noorte endi, mitte üksnes poliitika kujundajate vaatenurgast. Doktoritöös pakutud **lahendusvajaduste tasakaalustamise põhimõte** aitab teadlikuma kaasamise kaudu leida varasematest sobivamaid tegevusi ja lahendusi.

Doktoritöö kinnitas, et loodava mudeli keskmes saab olla **sotsiaalse innovatsiooni lähenemisviis**, mille kasutamine noortele suunatud poliitika kujundamisel võimaldab märgata uusi perspektiive sotsiaalsete probleemide lahendamiseks. Selleks on aga vaja riiklikus poliitikakujunduses muuta arusaamu sellest, mida peame poliitikate kaudu loodavaks avalikuks hüveks ehk kuidas tagada noorte tulemuslik toetamine. Kui senises arusaamises on tõhusus olnud pigem majanduslik kriteerium, siis **doktoritöö alusel on vaja rohkem fookusesse võtta noore enda tunnetatud toe vajadus**. See võimaldab vähendada niigi ebasoodsa positsiooniga noorte ilmajätust (nt tugisüsteemide mittesobivus) ja luua uusi ligipääsetavaid ning vajadustest lähtuvamaid paindlikke toetusformaate. See omakorda kiirendab positiivsete muutusteni viivaid mehhanisme, sest toetamisel keskendutakse esmalt heaolu suurendavatele ja haavatavust vähendavatele eluolukordadele. Doktoritöö andis ka teadmise, et poliitikakujundamisel tuleb arvestada noorte **õiguspärase** ootusega, et näiteks noortegarantii kokkuleppe alusel tagatakse neile **pikaajaline tugi**. Toe pakkumine ei tohi sõltuda sellest, kas tugisüsteemide rahastus riigis on ajutise iseloomuga.

Seetõttu pakun doktoritöö tulemusena NEET-olukorras noorte toetamise raamistiku alusena välja **toeõigluse (equisupport) mudeli** (vt Joonis 10).



Joonis 10. Noorte, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistes üleminekutes suunatud toetiguse mudeli komponendid doktoritöö uuringute I–V alusel

Termini nimetus tuleneb lähenemisviisi olemusest, mis tagab noortele võrdsed (*equal*) võimalused osalemaks nii poliitika kui iseenda toe loomes, võrdse (*equity*), õiglase ja õigustatud toe. Selle mudeli kohaselt tunnistame, et iga noore teekond, väljakutsed ja tugevused on ja saavad olla unikaalsed. Selle asemel, et pakkuda kõigile ühesugust abi, kohandame oma toetuse igatüüpi konkreetsete olude ja vajadustega. Toeõiglusest lähtuvad tegevused on iga noore individuaalsete vajaduste ja tugevuste kindlaksmääramine, vajaduspõhise toetuse pakkumine ja toetuse mõjususe pidev hindamine. Seetõttu võimaldab antud mudel **esmalts keskenduda noore ebasoodsast olukorrast väljumisele** ja vähendada noori toetavate **spetsialistide dilemmasid ning võimalikku survestamist, suunates noore** enne tegeliku abi saamist haridusse või tööhõivesse, kui ta selleks veel valmis ei ole.

Toeõigluse raamistiku rakendamine eeldab sotsiaalse innovatsiooni eri dimensioonide arvestamist, sealhulgas poliitilise sekkumise põhjendatust ja kasu ühiskonnale, õpikogemuse kogumist, ökosüsteemi pidevat kaasamist (vt Joonis 10). Oluline on ka koosloomeliste partnerlussuhete omaksvõtmine poliitikakaujundamises. See võimaldab saada sisendeid ja olla pidevalt kursis, kuidas noored olemaolevaid süsteeme tajuvad. Arvestamine **kaasavate ja usaldust tõstvate põhimõtetega** (nt olukorrapõhine kommunikatsioon, tähendus põhine muutuste juhtimine, koosloomel põhinev partnerlus, ühe ukse põhimõttel muutuste juhtimine ja lahendusvajaduste tasakaalustamine) aitab kaasa sellele, et noored **pääsevad paremini ligi neid toetavatele ressurssidele**, sealhulgas infole, haridusele ning tööturule laiemalt.

Lisaks, tuginedes uuele noorte toetamise mudelile, pakun oma doktoritöös poliitikakujunduse jaoks välja täiendava mõiste “Noored, kes on haridus- ja/või tööelulistes üleminekutes” (*Young people in Education or Employment Transitions*, akronüümiga **YET**). Uue mõistega tunnistame, et tegemist on noortega, kes on oma praeguse elusituatsiooni või muude asjaolude tõttu ajutiselt haridusest või tööturult eemal ning kelle olukorra paranemine või taastumine võimaldaks neil uuesti haridusse, tööturule või muudesse ennatteostatavatesse tegevustesse naasta. Mõiste nihutab fookuse staatiliselt staatusele üleminekulisele teekonnale, rõhutades haavatavuse ajutist ja olukorrapõhist iseloomu ning toetuse käsitlemist arenguprotsessina. Samuti tagab see mõiste võrdse kohtlemise noortele, kes näiteks ei ole võimelised kunagi tervislikel põhjustel avatud tööturule sisenema, kuid soovivad samuti oma potentsiaali realiseerida.

Seega näitas minu doktoritöö, kui oluline on poliitilise lähenemise kujundamisel arvestada, et noortele, kes läbivad haridus- või tööelulisi üleminekuid, saab mõjus tugi alguse kaasavast lähenemisest kogu öko- ja toetusüsteemi ulatuses, mis põhineb vastastikusel usaldusel, võrdsel võimalustel ja õiglasel kohtlemisel.

Toeõigluse kontseptsiooni peamised mõisted eesti keeles

Käesoleva doktoritöö tulemusel koostas ja sisustasin toeõigluse mudeli elluviimiseks vajaliku terminoloogia, millega tuleb noortele suunatud sekkumiste loomisel arvestada.

Koosloome ja vastastikune partnerlus [*co-creation and reciprocal partnership*]: Lähenedamine poliitikakujundamises, mis põhineb võrdsel partnerlusel ja koosloomel, aitab mõista, kuidas noored seni loodud süsteeme tajuvad, millised on sobivad viisid nendeni jõudmiseks ja toetamiseks ning millised on tagajärjed, kui noored ei saa õigel ajal abi. Selle teadmise põhjal saab koos noortega luua tulemuslikumaid ja püsivamaid lahendusi.

Koostoime ökosüsteemis [*co-production in ecosystem*]: Koostoime on kokkulepitud tegutsemisviis ühise probleemi lahendamiseks. See tugineb osapoolte kogemustele, pädevusele, ressurssidele ja võimestamisele, et saavutada ühine eesmärk.

Minimaalne teabevoog [*minimal information flow requirement*]: Lähenedamine poliitikakujundamises, kus andmete kogumise ja jagamise asemel keskendutakse inimese võimestamisele. Eesmärk on, et noor mõistaks, et ainult tema saab otsustada oma vajaduste ning selle üle, keda probleemide lahendamisse kaasata. Andmevahetus toimube noore nõusolekul ja usaldusliku suhte alusel.

Mõjus tugi [*effective support*]: Noorele on osutatud tuge, mis vastab tema poolt määratletud vajadustele.

Noored haridus- ja tööelulistes üleminekutes [*Young people in Education or Employment Transitions, YET*]: Noored, kes on hetke eluolukorra või muude asjaolude tõttu ajutiselt haridusest ja tööturult eemal ning kelle olukorra leevendus või lähenemine loob eeldused edasiseks liikumiseks haridusse, tööturule või muudesse eneseteostuslikesse tegevustesse.

Olukorrapõhine kommunikatsioon [*situation-based communication*]: Lähenedamine poliitikakujundamises, mis keskendub noorte olukorra ja vajaduste lahendamisele, arvestades, et noor ise ei ole probleem.

Pikaajaline õigustatud ootus [*long-term legitimate expectation*]: Õiguspärane eeldus, et riigi noortegarantii kokkuleppe alusel saavad noored pikaajalist ja mõjusat abi vastavalt oma tunnetatud vajadusele ka siis, kui tugisüsteemide rahastus on ajutise iseloomuga (projekti- või programmipõhine).

Toeõiglus [*equisupport*]: Põhimõtte teenuse- ja poliitikaloomes, mis tagab noortele võrdsed (equal) võimalused koosloomeks iseenda teenuste loomisel, võrdsuse (equity) ja õigustatud toe. Sellega tunnistame, et iga noore väljakutsed, teekond ja tegevused on unikaalsed.

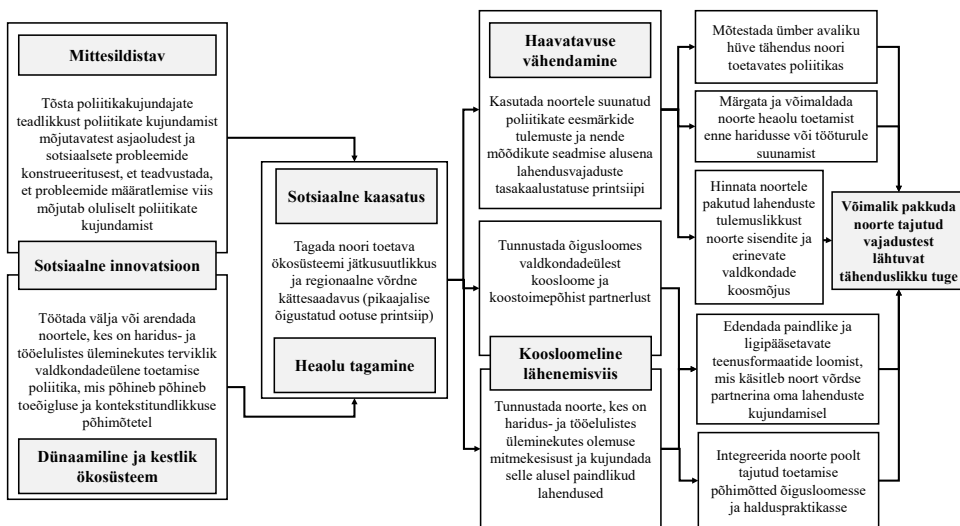
Täenduslik muutus [*meaning-based change management*]: Võimestav sekkumisviis, kus noore toetamine põhineb tema tugevustel, usaldamisel ja püsiva usalduse loomisel turvalises, hoolivas ja mitteformaalses keskkonnas.

Vajaduste tasakaalustatus [*needs-based rebalancing*]: Lähenedamine poliitika kujundamises, kus eesmärkide ja tulemuste seadmisel arvestatakse võrdselt noorte endi hinnangut oma lahendusvajadustele ning üldisi ootusi poliitikale.

Ühe ukse muutuste juhtimine [*one-stop change management*]: Lähenedamine noori toetavates sekkumistes, kus osapooled lepivad kokku ühe peamise noort toetava usaldusisiku (protsessijuhi), kes suhtleb vajadusel teiste teenusepakkujatega. Protsessijuht ei pruugi olla peateenusepakkuja ja tema valiku võib teha noor ise.

Poliitikasoovitused

Üldised soovitused neile, kes loovad poliitikaid noortele, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistes üleminekutes (vt Joonis 11). Spetsiifilised lisasoovitused Eestile on leitavad Lisast 1.



Joonis 11. Toeõigluse mudelist lähtuvad poliitikasoovitused, soovitude aluseks olevad teoreetilised lähtekohad ja soovitustevahelised seosed

- 1) **Tõsta poliitikakujundajate teadlikkust, kuidas poliitikate kujundamist mõjutavad probleemide määratlemise viisid ja sotsiaalsete probleemide konstrueerimine.** Probleemiolemuse sõnastus mõjutab otseselt poliitikate kujundamist. Poliitikameetmete disainimisel tuleb vältida tegevusi, mis võivad survestada noori vastu võtma neile mittejõukohaseid otsuseid. Eelkõige on vaja individuaalsid ja paindlikke lahendusi.
- 2) **Töötada välja või arendada terviklik poliitika noorte valdkondade-üleseks toetamiseks, mis põhineb toeõigluse ja kontekstitundlikkuse põhimõtetel.** Noorte, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistes üleminekutes toetamiseks vajalik raamistik peab valmima koostöös nii noorte endi kui ka kohaliku tasandi ökosüsteemiga, arvestades nii noorte tajutud vajadusi kui ka ühiskonna ootusi. Eelkõige tuleb arvestada, et lahendused peavad olema kestlikud, süsteemsed, paindlikud ja noori mitte sildistavad, et aidata neil jõuda haridusse või tööturule. Tunnistame, et iga noore teekond, väljakutsed

- ja tugevused on unikaalsed. Selle asemel, et pakkuda kõigile ühesugust abi, kohandame toetuse vastavalt igäühe olukorrale, vajadustele ja võimekusele.
- 3) **Tagada noori toetava ökosüsteemi jätkusuutlikkus ja regionaalne võrdne kättesaadavus (pikaajalise õigustatud ootuse printsiip).** Noorte toetamine ei tohi sõltuda piirkonnast ja ajutistest programmidest või projektidest. Avaliku sektori teenused peavad olema järjepidevad, et noored ei jääks haavatavas olukorras abita/toeta. Projektipõhisust tuleb tasakaalustada süsteemsete riiklike lahendustega, mis tagavad pikaajalise toe.
 - 4) **Kasutada noortele suunatud poliitikate eesmärkide ja nende mõõdikute seadmise alusena lahendusvajaduste tasakaalustatuse printsiipi.** Tõhususe ja jätkusuutlikkuse tagamiseks tuleb arvestada noorte enda tajutud vajaduste ning avaliku poliitika üldeesmärkide (nt kiire tagasipöördumine haridusse või tööturule) vahelise tasakaaluga. Noore heaolu ja valmisoleku austamine ja neist lähtuv toetamine vähendab korduva riskiolukorra ja sellest tuleneva sotsiaalse tõrjutuse riski.
 - 5) **Tunnustada õigusloomes valdkondadeülelt koosloome ja koostoimepõhist partnerlust.** Sotsiaalse innovatsiooni rakendamine eeldab muudatusi õigusloomes, et võimaldada uusi koostöömehhanisme teenuseosutajate ja noorte vahel. Hariduse, sotsiaaltöö, noorsootöö, tööhõive, lõimumise, tervise ja siseturvalisuse valdkondade vaheline sünergia ja koostoime võimaldab noorte, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistest üleminekutes tõhusamat ja koordineeritud toetust.
 - 6) **Tunnustada noorte, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistest üleminekutes olemuse mitmekesisust ja kujundada selle alusel paindlikud lahendused.** Sihtrühm on olemuselt heterogeenne ja vajab individuaalset ning kontekstitundlikku lähenemist. Tõhus toetamine eeldab toimivat ökosüsteemi, kus erinevad tasandid ja institutsioonid teevad koordineeritud ja järjepidevat koostööd.
 - 7) **Mõtestada ümber avaliku hüve tähendus noori toetavates poliitikates.** Avaliku hüve defineerimisel tuleb liikuda majanduslikule efektiivsusele keskendunud käsitluselt inimese vajaduspõhisusele. Tulemusliku poliitika mõõdikuks peab olema see, kuivõrd sobitub pakutav abi noore enda tajutud vajadustega ning aitab kaasa tema pikaajalisele eneseteostusele ja ühiskondlikule osalusele.
 - 8) **Märgata ja võimaldada noorte heaolu toetamist enne haridusse või tööturule suunamist.** Enne tööellu või haridusse suunamist on vaja keskenduda noorte heaolu ja enesekindluse tõstmisele. Vajalikud on turvalised keskkonnad ning mitmedimenionaalsed ja individuaalset arengut toetavad tegevused, mis arendavad noorte sotsiaalseid oskusi, tööharjumusi, meeskonnatööd ja karjäärivalmidust, mis aitavad noortel haridussüsteemi naasta või tööturule siseneda. Laiemalt peavad need tegevused toetama noorte sotsiaalset ja kogukonda kaasatust.
 - 9) **Hinnata noortele pakutud lahenduste tulemuslikkust noorte ja erinevate valdkondade sisendite koosmõjus.** Poliitikameetmete kvaliteedi ja sobivuse määratlemisel tuleb arvestada nii noorte endi kui ka erinevate

valdkondade koosmõju hinnangut. Noore kogemuse arvestamine (nt eba-soodsast olukorrast välja jmt) ja valdkondade ühismõjus loodud dimensiooni väljatoomine poliitika/sekkumise edukuse ühe mõõdikuna aitab vältida süsteemseid pimenurki ja vajakajäämisi ning toetada tõhusamat poliitikate elluviimist.

- 10) **Edendada paindlike ja ligipääsetavate teenusformaatide loomist, mis käsitlevad noort võrdse partnerina oma lahenduste kujundamisel.** Noorte vajadustest lähtuvad ja erinevate sektorite ning valdkondade koostöös rakendatud lähenemised aitavad ennetada noorte marginaliseerumist. Toetus peab olema paindlik, vajadus- ja kontekstipõhine, mille keskmes olev noor saab olla aktiivne kaasmõtestaja ja otsustaja, mitte pelgalt teenuse saaja.
- 11) **Integreerida noorte tunnetuskesksed toetamise põhimõtted õigusloomesse ja halduspraktikasse:**
 - Koosloome ja vastastikuse partnerluse printsiip – sekkumised peavad põhinema võrdsusel ja koostööl, kaasates noort lahenduste ja isikliku toevajaduse kujundamisse.
 - Olukorrapõhise kommunikatsiooni printsiip – noort ei tohi defineerida probleemi kaudu, fookus peab olema tema olukorral, mitte isikul.
 - Tähtsuse printsiip – toetamine peab toimuma usalduspõhiselt, turvalises ja hoolivas keskkonnas, noore tugevustele keskenduv lähenemine aitab parandada tema enesehinnangut ja suurendab muutuse võimalikkust.
 - Lähivõrgustiku mõjuprintsiip – oluline on arvestada noore lähivõrgustiku mõjuga ning pakkuda tuge ka tema ümber olevale kogukonnale.
 - Ühe ukse sisenemise printsiip – noore jõudmine tema vajadustega vastavuses olevale teenusele, olenemata tema esimesest sisenetud teenusest (uksest).
 - Ühe ukse juhtimise printsiip – noorele tuleb vajadusel tagada võimestamine ühe peamise usaldusisiku kaudu, kus protsessijuht ise suhtleb teiste teenuseosutajatega, et tagada sujuv tugi.
 - Minimaalse teabevoovajaduste printsiip – noore toetamiseks vajalik andmevahetus toimub noore nõusolekul, noort ei tohi survestada jagama infot, enne kui ta on selleks valmis.

Lisasoovitused Eesti poliitikakujundajatele

Doktoritöö kinnitas, et sotsiaalse innovatsiooni lähenemise kasutamine lastele ja noortele suunatud poliitikate loomes ja seotud tegevuste elluviimises on Eestis vaikselt juurdumas. Eestis mõjutavad noortele suunatud poliitikate kujundamist ja elluviimist positiivselt arusaam valdkondadeülese lähenemise vajalikkusest ja ühine tahe noori võimestada, tugev noori toetav ökosüsteem ning digiriigi võimekus saada teada noortest ja nende murekohtadest. Samal ajal on endiselt takistuseks laste ja noorte toetamise vastutuse killustatus, õigusloome ajakriitilisus, toetavate tegevuste projektipõhisus (lühiajaline rahastus). Avalik sektor on veel

pigem riskikartlik (nt tulemuslikkuse ümbermõtestamine, algusest peale ühise õigusloome kujundamine), toetudes standardlahendustele ning noorte vähestele sisulisele kaasamisele neid puudutava poliitika kujundamisse. Eestis on ka suu- resti kasutamata kohaliku tasandi võimalused (nt vabaühendused, sotsiaalsed ettevõtted), kes on valmis katsetama paindlikke, kogukonnapõhiseid ja usaldusel põhinevaid lahendusi. Eestis vajab lisatõuget eelkõige juhtimiskultuuri, rahastus- loogika, keelekasutuse, toimetoodika ja erinevate tegevuste koostoimes ellu- viimise võimalikkuse ümbermõtestamine. Muutuse loomise keskmes peavad olema valdkondadeülene õppimine, paindlikude toelahendused ja noorte tunnus- tamine võrdsete partneritena.

Selle muutuse saavutamiseks on poliitikakujundamises vaja:

- 1) suunata protsesside juhtimine prognoosimiselt õppimisele ehk raken- dada õppivat poliitikakujundamist.** See tähendab, et poliitikakujundajad loovad pigem tingimused katsetamiseks, kohandamiseks ja õppimiseks;
- 2) suunata planeerimine ühekordselt otsustusprotsessilt poliitikatsüklite lähenemisele.** See võimaldab käsitleda katsetamist ja õppivat poliitikat poliitika arendamise osana, et pideva õpikogemuse kaudu luua sobivamaid lahendusi;
- 3) suunata õigusloome täpsetelt ettekirjutustelt üldiste raamistike loomi- sele.** Detailsete ettekirjutuste asemel luuakse õiguslikud raamid, mis võimal- davad paindlikku juhtumikorraldust ning koostööd üle asutuste ja sektorite;
- 4) suunata tulemuste mõõtmine osaluspõhisuselt noore püsiva muutuse loomisele.** See tähendab keskendumist arenguliste mudelitele, kus hinna- takse lisaks arvulistele näitajatele (nt osalus ja konkreetse tulemuse määr) ka uute meetmete katsetamist ja nende vastavust noorte vajadustele (sh toime- tuleku ja teenuses kaasosalemise valmisoleku kasvu);
- 5) suunata ametnike kompetentside täiendamine haldamiselt toimivate lahenduste kujundamisele.** See tähendab, et poliitikakujundajad ja ellu- viijad omandavad lisaks õigus- ja halduspädevusele oskusi avatud valitse- mise, koosloome ja teenusedisaini kohta;
- 6) suunata tugitegevuste elluviimine projektipõhisuselt õppiva arengupro- grammi lähenemisele.** See võimaldab katsetada ajaliselt piiritletud, kuid püsivale lahendusele suunatud tegevusi, mille eesmärk on koos ökosüsteemiga kujundada, katsetada ja kohandada tegevusi (elemente). Protsessi käi- gus noortelt kogutud kogemuslik ja tõendustloov teadmine on aluseks edasisele arendamisele ja laiendamisele. On oluline, et protsessis osalejad on teadlikud selle eesmärkidest ja ajutisest iseloomust ega jää vajalikust toest ilma ka pärast arenguprogrammi lõppu;
- 7) rollide ümbermõtestamisel viia fookus noorest kui kliendist võrdseks partneriks.** Noori tuleb käsitleda mitte poliitika objektidena, vaid kaas- kujundajate ja eksperteadmiste kandjatena, mis see eeldab otsustusõiguse ja vastutuse teadlikku jagamist;
- 8) suunata noore toetamine eraldiseisvate teenuste osutamisel pikaaja- lisele eesmärgi saavutamisele.** See aitab vältida olukorda, kus noor küll

läbib teenuseid, kuid ei liigu oma pikaajalise eesmärgi poole. Teenus peab olema võimestav vahend, mitte eesmärk omaette;

- 9) **juhtumikorralduse ümbermõtestamine, viies fookuse lineaarselt teenusepaketi kombineeritava tervikule.** Noorel peab olema võimalik erinevaid abi/toevajadusi mõtestada ja valida tuge moodulite või elementidena, neid järjestada ja ajas vastavalt olukorrale muuta;
- 10) sealhulgas **juhtumikorralduste juhtimise ümbermõtestamine, viies fookuse mitmest protsessijuhist ühele vastutavale kontakt- või usaldusisikule.** See võimaldab koordineerida noore poolt valitud teenusemooduleid eri asutustest, kohandada toe teekonda jooksvalt ja vabastab noore vajadusest ise süsteemis orienteeruda;
- 11) **teenusesse sisenemise ja väljumise ümbermõtestamine, viies fookuse eraldiseisvatelt teenustelt kombineeritud lähenemisele.** Noor võib alustada ükskõik millisest moodulist, mis vastab tema hetkevajadusele (nt vaimne tervis, eluaseme stabiilsus, sotsiaalsed oskused, töökogemus ja praktika, formaalharidusse naasmine jmt). Ühe mooduli katkestamine (nt töötü staatus lõpetamine) ei tähenda kogu toe lõppu, vaid võimaldab teha uusi valikuid (noort teavitatakse teistest võimalustest);
- 12) **poliitikas kasutatavate väljendite muutmine või ümbermõtestamine.** Keel ei ole neutraalne, vaid määrab ära, mida peetakse võimalikuks, mõeldavaks ja seaduslikuks (Tabel 1).

Tabel 1. NEET-olukorras noortele suunatud poliitilistes kasutatavate väljendite ülevaade ja soovitusend nende muutmisteks või tõlgendamiseks

Kasutusel olev mõiste	Soovitatud mõiste	Muutuse kese
Aitamine, toetamine	Võimestamine	Rõhk on sisemisel ressursil.
Tulemuslik meede	Mõjus lahendus noorele	Lahendus saab olla personaalne ja fookus lisaks osalusele/hetke-saavutustele püsival mõjul.
Koostöö	Koosloome, koostoimimine	Protsess saab alguse ühiselt määratletud lahendatavast probleemkohast, rollidest ja vastutusest, mis võimaldab noorele sobivamat tuge ja ühiseid rahastamisvõimalusi.
Mitteaktiivne noor	Erinevas valmisolekus noor	Fookus on noore tegelikul valmisolekul ja võimetekohasusel.
Mõjususe ja teostatavuse analüüs	Pidev kogemusliku teadmise arvestamine	Võimaldab koguda koostöös ökosüsteemiga vajalikku õpikogemust erinevate väljundite kaudu.
NEET – mitteõppiv ja -töötav noor	Noor, kes on haridus- ja tööelulistes üleminekutes (YET)	Toob esile noore hetke eluolukorra või muud asjaolud, mille tõttu nad ei ole hõivatud ning mille leevendus või lahendumine loob eeldused edasiseks liikumiseks haridusse, tööturule või teistesse eneseteostuslikesse tegevustesse.
Osalus	Kaaskujundamine	Võimaldab jagatud otsustusõigust ja vastutust, sh kaaskujundamine võimaldab noorel otsustada nii teenuse, vajalike ressursijaotuste kui ka laiemalt poliitika sisu osas.
Osapooled, asutused, institutsioonid	Ökosüsteem	Võimaldab näha noore ümber olevat asutuste võrgustikku kui pidevalt uuenevat võrgustikku.
Poliitrikakujundmine	Õppiv poliitika	Võimaldab kaasata ökosüsteemi kogemust ja näha protsessi tsükli-põhisena, mille tulemusel luuakse sel ajahetkel toimivad lahendused.
Rakendamine	Käivitamine, kohandamine (katsetamine)	Võimaldab poliitrikate elluviimist käsitleda põhimõttel, et see ei kordu igas kontekstis ühtemoodi, vaid see loob ruumi uutele lahendustele (tõendeid loov).
Sihtrühm	Noored eksperdid	Noore oma elu eksperdina käsitlemine tähendab, et teda võetakse võrdse partnerina toe- või poliitikaloomes.
Sekkumise väljund	Toe/ võimestamise arengutekkond	Võimalik hinnata noore arengulist vaadet lisaks teenuses oleva aja mõõtmisele.

Kasutusel olev mõiste	Soovitatud mõiste	Muutuse kese
Standardlahendus	Personaallahendus, personaalselt kohandatav lahendus	Võimaldab noorte vajadustest lähtuvalt erinevat lähenemist.
Tagasiside	Kogemuslik teadmine	Võimaldab käsitleda noore kogemust teenuse või poliitikakujundamise sisendina, mis omakorda toob lahendust pakkuvate tegevuste fookusesse vajaduse pidevalt noore kogemuslikku teadmist (sisendit) koguda.
Tugimeede	Tugimeede, kui noore individuaalsest toetusvajadusest lähtuv element/ moodul, mille valiku aluseks on selle funktsioon noore pikaajalise eesmärgi saavutamisel	Võimaldab nihutada fookust teenuselt eesmärgile, kus noore jaoks on keskne see, mis eesmärgil ta seda saab. Süsteem kohandub noore vajaduste ja eesmärkidega ja noor ei pea enam sobituma olemasolevatesse teenustesse. See omakorda vähendab olukorras, kus teenus ei toimi, noore tunnet ebaõnnestuda. Võimaldab valdkondadevahelise toe paremat kombineerimist.
Tugimeetme osutamine	Toe kujundamine	Võimaldab toe paindlikkust, sest teenus ei ole valmis toode.
Tõhus	Mõjus	Võimaldab rõhutada toe tulemuslikkust ja vastavust noorte vajadustele.

PUBLICATIONS

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name: Heidi Paabort
Date of birth: September 25, 1975
Address: University of Tartu, Institute of Social Studies,
Lossi 36, 51003 Tartu
E-mail: heidi.paabort@mkm.ee

Education:
2021–2026 University of Tartu, PhD programme in sociology
2017–2019 University of Tartu, Master’s programme in sociology
1993–1997 University of Tartu Viljandi Culture Academy, Bachelor’s
programme in dance art

Professional Employment:
2023–... Ministry of Economic Affairs and Communications, Advisor to
the Employment Department
2021–2023 Social Insurance Board, Youth Guarantee Adviser
2008–2022 Estonian Association of Open Youth Centres, Executive Director
& Programme Manager Youth Prop-Up
2004–2007 School Network Office, Consultant for external (ESF) projects
1997–2004 Põltsamaa Co-Educational Gymnasium, Recreation director &
dance teacher

Main research topics: youth guarantee, vulnerable target groups, NEETs, co-creation, social innovation, youth work, creating interventions, policy creation.

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- Villum, B., Kivest, A-L., Kängsepp, K., Kõiv, K., Paabort, H., Pirk, R., Reinomägi, A., Turk, P. (2021). Laste võimalused kooliväliseks tegevuseks. Dagmar Kutsar (Toim.). *Lapsed Eesti ühiskonnas* (pp. 95–120). Tallinn: Õiguskantsleri Kantselei.
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Additional publications:

- Paabort, H. (2024). Noori tööturule nügides. Mihus: Eesti Noortevaldkonna ajakiri.
- Beilmann, M., Kõiv, K., Kährik, A., Otstavel, S., Paabort, H. (2023). Participatory Policy Making with Young People in Tallinn.
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- Paabort, H., Uusen, K. (2021). Arvamuslugu) Kaire Uusen, Heidi Paabort| palun ärme laseme noortel koolist välja kukkuda! Eesti Päevaleht.
- Paabort, H., Kõiv, K. (2020). Noorsootõtjad: kui noored ei leia kriisi tulemusel Eestist väljundit, siis nad heituvad või lahkuvad. Eesti Päevaleht.
- Paabort, H. (2019). Heidi Paabort: miks jääb noorte haridustee poolikuks? Seda trendi saab peatada. Eesti Päevaleht.
- Paabort, H. (2019). Heidi Paabort: ettevõtjad, andke noortele töökogemus! Äripäev.
- Paabort, H. (2019). Noored, kes ei õpi ega tööta sõltuvad Eesti regionaalpoliitikast. ERR Novaator.
- Paabort, H. (2018). Päästerõngas nii Eesti noortele kui ka kohalikele omavalitsustele. Õpetajate Leht.
- Paabort, H. (2018). Millistel noortel on suurim risk Eestis hätta jääda. Õpetajate Leht.
- Paabort, H. (2017). Noorte Tugila juht: 30 000 “kadunud” noort pole väljamõeldis ning nad vajavad meie abi. Eesti Päevaleht.

Involvement in research projects and networks:

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| 2024–... | European Rural Youth Observatory (EURYO) |
| 2024–2025 | Future Youth Information for Rural Areas, Cost Innovators Grant |
| 2022–2024 | Public employment services tracking effectiveness in supporting rural NEETs, EEA |
| 2019–2023 | Urban Policy Innovation to address inequality with and for Future generations-UPLIFT, Horizon2020 |
| 2019–2023 | Rural NEET Youth Observatory, COST Action 18213 |

ELULOOKIRJELDUS

Nimi: Heidi Paabort
Sünniaeg: 25. september 1975
Aadress: Tartu Ülikooli ühiskonnateaduste instituut, Lossi 36, 51003 Tartu
E-mail: heidi.paabort@mkm.ee

Haridus:

2021–2026 Tartu Ülikool, doktoriõpe, sotsioloogia
2017–2019 Tartu Ülikool, magister, sotsioloogia
1993–1997 Tartu Ülikooli Viljandi Kultuuriakadeemia, bakalaureus, tantsukunst

Teenistuskäik:

2023–... Majandus- ja Kommunikatsiooniministeerium, tööhõive osakonna nõunik
2021–2023 Sotsiaalkindlustusamet, noortegarantii nõunik
2008–2022 Eesti Avatud Noortekeskuste Ühendus, tegevjuht & Noorte Tugila programmijuht
2004–2007 HTM Koolivõrgu Büroo, välisprojektide konsultant
1997–2004 Põltsamaa Ühisgümnaasium, huvijuht & tantsuõpetaja

Peamised uurimisteemad: noortegarantii, NEET-olukorras noored, koosloome, sotsiaalne innovatsioon, noosrootöö, tööhõive, sekkumiste loome, poliitikaloo

Teaduspublikatsioonid:

Paabort, H., Beilmann, M. (2025). Poliitikakujundamise nihked NEET-olukorras noortega töötamiseks: noorte ja spetsialistide vaatenurk. *Riigikogu Toimetised*, 52, 93–104.

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Populaarteaduslikud publikatsioonid:

- Paabort, H. (2024). Noori tööturule nügides. Mihus: Eesti Noortevaldkonna ajakiri.
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- Paabort, H. (2017). Noorte Tugila juht: 30 000 “kadunud” noort pole väljamõeldis ning nad vajavad meie abi. Eesti Päevaleht.

Osalemine teadusprojektides ja -võrgustikes:

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| 2024–... | European Rural Youth Observatory (EURYO) |
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