

StayOn_

A more inclusive, active
and creative world!

POTENTIALS ASSESSMENT REPORT

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1. INTRODUCTION

StayOn is a transnational project coordinated through the cooperation of eight European partners whose ultimate objective is to create conditions that enable young people to "stay on" rural areas by ensuring access to opportunities, benefits, services, and jobs. With this potentials assessment report, we intend to examine current and future labor market needs and identify potentials for implementing possible support solutions in the Autonomous Region of the Azores by CRESAÇOR, one of StayOn's project partners. This report is to be read as part of the project's "Impact management and research" work package, representing a systematic effort to provide credible evidence on the causal impact of interventions meant to integrate young adults and NEETs¹ especially, in the labor market.

The work package is managed by the European Center for Social Finance (ECSF). It encompasses a series of activities, including developing a Theory of Change and related impact management framework, creating periodic impact evaluations, and learning to inform decision-making within and among the organizations involved. This report proceeds as follows. After this brief introduction, Section 2 details the methodology used to conduct the potentials assessment, Section 3 describes the context, while Section 4 reports the findings. Finally, in the last section, we interpret them and discuss the lessons learned to facilitate the translation of discoveries into practice for the project's partners.

2. METHODS

Data collection

Data collection took place in two phases. The first step included a questionnaire filled out jointly by two informants: a local representative employed by the project partner CRESAÇOR and an external stakeholder. The questionnaire, available in full in the Appendix to this report, was divided into four parts and gave the respondents the chance to support their answers with secondary sources:

- 1) The first part aimed at gathering general information about the respondents and their organizations;
- 2) The second part explored the Azorean community or communities of interest in the implementation of the project;
- 3) The third part investigated ten driving forces of youth employment within the local context (these are listed in Table 1 below);
- 4) In the fourth part, the respondents were involved in ranking the driving forces according to the level of impact on youth employment and the degree of influenceability. The goal at this stage of the research process was to classify the driving forces into four categories:

- *negligible blows* show low impact and low influenceability on youth employment;

¹ Young persons not engaged in education, employment or training.

- *realizable trifles* are highly influenceable driving forces with low impact on youth employment;
- *unshapable trends* are characterized by high impact and low influenceability;
- *crucial potentials* are highly impactful and highly influenceable driving forces that represent prospects for action;

5) The last part allowed for final comments and the possibility to share further insights about the phenomenon.

Table 1. Driving forces of youth employment (Parola, 2020)

<i>Driving forces external to the labor market</i>	<i>Driving forces internal to the labor market</i>	
	<i>Demand for workers</i>	<i>Supply of workers</i>
A. Automation	C. State of the economy	F. Poor skills of job-seekers
B. Globalization	D. Type of contracts	G. Type of education
	E. Informal work	H. Skills mismatch
		I. Demographic factors
		J. Socioeconomic factors

As indicated by researchers at the ECSF, external stakeholders could be - but were not limited to public officials and other public servants (e.g., mayors, council members, politicians), young people not in employment nor education and their families, youth workers, and business owners in the community or communities of interest. For this study, the external stakeholder chosen works at the Regional Youth Directorate in the department of youth policy and entrepreneurship in the Azores. The Regional Directorate for Youth designs, implements and assesses youth policy. Additionally, it collaborates with the Portuguese National Agencies that manage programs such as "Erasmus + Education and Training", "Erasmus + Youth in Action" and "European Solidarity Corps". They develop dissemination and advisory activities about the programs and activities aimed at empowering young people at an individual and associative level (European Programmes and European Youth Information Networks, 2022).

Phase two of data collection consisted of an online interview with the local representative and the external stakeholder. The goal of the interview was to have a clearer understanding of the questionnaire responses collected in phase one. The interviewees were asked a series of open-ended questions, resulting in follow-up questions by the interviewer. The interview was held in English via Zoom on 10 March 2022, lasted 62 minutes and revolved around the information provided in the questionnaire.

Data analysis

We employed an amended version of the intuitive logics approach to scenario development to analyze the data, which is particularly suited to support decision-making processes by generating options for action (Kosow & Gaßner, 2008). Depending on their position in the two rankings, driving forces were assigned a weight (from one to ten).

Driving forces ranked number one were assigned a weight of ten, driving forces ranked number two were assigned a weight of nine, and so forth. This process allowed for the development of an impact/influenceability matrix. We then examined the respondents' input regarding the four quadrants in which the ten driving forces appeared.

3. THE AZOREAN CONTEXT

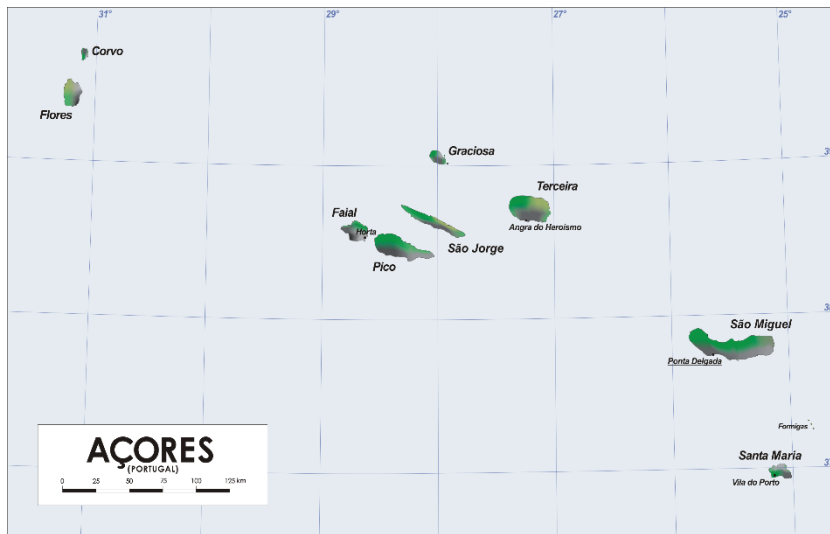
CRESAÇOR

CRESAÇOR - Regional Cooperative for Solidarity Economy was founded in 2000 in the form of a Social Solidarity Cooperative with limited responsibility. It is made of 30 cooperators and non-profit organizations spread across the entire territory of the Azores archipelago in Portugal. CRESAÇOR aims at increasing access to education, training, and job incubation within the social employment market, supporting the creation of solidarity economy initiatives. Within the StayOn project, CRESAÇOR takes on the role of community catalyst partner, acting as a change agent that unlocks youth potential and assumes the responsibility for managing change activities in a community. The organization is headquartered on the island of São Miguel, the largest and most populous island in the Azores. However, CRESAÇOR's areas of intervention cover the entire territory of the Azores region. According to Eurostat's Regional Yearbook (2020), the Autonomous Region of the Azores belongs to the category of less developed regions in Europe (GDP/head < 75% of EU-27 average). In the Azores, the youth unemployment rate was 19.8% in 2018, above the Portuguese national average (14.1%) and the EU average of 12.8% (European Commission, 2020).

Azorean communities

The target communities identified by CRESAÇOR are all located in the territory of the region of Azores Islands. The Azores, officially the Autonomous Region of the Azores, is a transcontinental archipelago and an autonomous territory of the Portuguese Republic. The islands are located in the northeast Atlantic, endowed with political and administrative autonomy, embodied in the Political Administrative Statute of the Autonomous Region of the Azores. Among the main economic activities of the Azores are agricultural production, fishing industries, tourism, environment and regional planning, and civil construction due to the islands' geographical features and climate. The public sector, including administration, health, and education, is a major source of employment, too. Each island has unique economic characteristics in terms of geography, infrastructure development, education opportunities, and geographical features.

Figure 1. Map of Azores Islands, (Wikimedia Commons, the free media repository, 2016)



The communities chosen for implementation are located on two different islands, namely São Miguel and Terceira. More specifically, eighth groups of communities have been identified: Nordeste, Ponta Delgada, Ribeira Grande, Vila Franca, Lagoa and Povoação in São Miguel Island, and Angra do Heroísmo and Praia da Vitória in Terceira Island. In general, there is a lack of transportation services within and between the islands. The boat trips between the islands are sporadic, and the mobility in the islands is limited. There are no systematic and regular buses, trains, or car services; therefore, the authorities that provide youth services face several limitations. As explained in the interview with the external stakeholder, youth cards providing discounts on transportation, restaurants, and several social areas are assigned by the Regional Directorate for Youth.

Figure 2. São Miguel Island of the region of Azores Islands, Grotta do Inferno (Lchacal, 2022)



Figure 3. Terceira Island of the region of Azores Islands, Angra do Heroísmo municipality (Dias, 2022)



4. KEY FINDINGS

Driving forces external to the labor market

The analysis reveals that *automation* is not a significant driving force impacting youth employment in the Azores. In some industries such as the autonomous energy systems with significant potential for renewable energy, mainly from wind, hydro and geothermal sources, human labor has been replaced by automated machines; however, the rate of automation in the Azores is below mainland Portugal and other countries in the European Union. Due to the weak financial capacity of employers to hire human resources that correspond to their actual needs, certain companies increase their investment in automation; however, the process evolves slowly. It is possible to observe a few examples where human labor was replaced by machines, especially on the island of São Miguel. The impact of automation is of course relative to the context of reference; the professions in which aesthetic, social and personal judgment (such as cook, hairdresser, or psychologist) play an important role will likely not be penalized. In addition, automation and robotics will bring work to many young people who decide to enter this field, as there will be an increase in the need for workers able to construct these machines.

Regarding *globalization*, another driving force of youth employment, the data collected reveals that it has produced unprecedented structural uncertainty (Blossfeld, Dirk Hofacker, Rizza, & Bertolini, 2011). Specifically, globalization has made it possible for companies to adapt to new flexible forms of work. In the Azores, globalization comprises two aspects: a) migration within an island (home and destination areas are on the same island) and b) mobility and migratory movement among the nine islands in the Autonomous Region of the Azores and abroad. Emigration decision-making has multiple levels of constraints and incentives which shape weak ties on behavior for youth communities: regional and national relationships and circumstances, dimensions in the

home social system, and individual and family relationships. Youth at risk of social exclusion usually prefer to stay on their native island. The reason is that the conditions and resources (transportation, education, social activities) in the rural areas of each island are often not enough to invest in personal and professional growth, which lead to the opposite of emmigration. Due to the lack of public transport on an island, a young person without a private car cannot move freely, reducing employment opportunities. Also, the boat service between the islands has paused for the last three years, and the estimated reopening date is likely to be in two years. With regards to emigration abroad, it is possible to see young people moving to São Miguel Island or mainland Portugal (Lisbon, Porto, Coimbra) to study.

Driving forces internal to the labor market: demand for workers

Concerning the *state of the economy*, the Azores have been struggling with economic development that is insufficient to provide many opportunities for young people. Additionally, the archipelago is characterized by the problem of uneven economic development across the nine islands. The COVID-19 pandemic did not help to balance off the differences, as its impact has been far from even. Detailed statistical data on youth employment and unemployment in the region of Azores can be found in the Azorean Youth Observatory Statistics Database.

Young people in the Azores are affected by the *type of contracts*; more specifically, the low salaries on the market do not allow for self-sufficiency, and they usually do not correspond to the amount of work performed. In the Azores, contracts are typically fixed-term. This aspect reflects the seasonality of many jobs on the archipelago that are linked to tourism, fishery, and agriculture. The government of Azores opened a department of work policy to educate employers and companies about the type of contracts, providing benefits to employers willing to hire young people.

Additionally, *informal work* represents a further obstacle. Due to lack of education, young people grudgingly admit to working without formal work contracts, a situation that is often considered "normal" in the Azores. Forms of undeclared work are especially common in tourism, agriculture, fisheries, and civil construction since an urgent and seasonal demand characterizes these industries. Informal work is more typically spread amongst the weakest categories, such as youth. This situation causes financial and social instability for young people.

Driving forces internal to the labor market: supply of workers

The *poor skills of job-seekers* in the Azores have been referred to as a real problem, especially when looking at young adults' level of education. According to data from the National Statistics Institute of Portugal, the early school leaving rate in 2021 in the Azores was 23.2%, while the national average was 10.6%. The Regional Government is implementing an integrated plan to promote school success, which aims to reduce the early dropout rate of education and training. Another essential aim is to increase school success at all education levels, in line with the European Strategy for Education and Training.

Furthermore, the *type of education* also seems to affect youth employment in the Azores. The only public university in the Autonomous Region of the Azores is located on São Miguel, Terceira and Faial Island and it suffers from declining students enrolments. The lack of inter-island transportation services and the high cost of flight prices push students to forgo higher education, highlighting the evident adverse effects of having a single public university for the whole archipelago. Additionally, a recent report by the European Commission (2021) highlighted that the region's low levels of training provision often encourage students to emigrate to attend other national higher education institutions. In general, this is the result of weak Regional Government support towards the University of Azores and an educational offer that, for now, does not harnesses the potential of the region. A Portuguese sociologist and Professor at the University of Azores, Fernando Diogo, also warns that social programmes tend to focus too much on infrastructures, overlooking the working conditions of teachers which mostly determine students' success (The Portugal News, 2022).

According to recent research by the Boston Consulting Group (2020), the *skills mismatch* (i.e., the discrepancy between the skills sought by employers and the skills that individuals possess) is a global phenomenon. In the Azores, on the one hand, there is a shortage of graduates. Young people with few qualifications face many difficulties when integrating into the job market. On the other hand, young people with above-average capabilities do not get a positive response from the labor market due to lack of experience. Young people who are integrated into the labor market in professional areas below their qualifications are also an indicator of skills mismatch typical of the archipelago.

Demographic factors also play a role in finding and retaining work in the Azores. The socioeconomic and geographical inequalities between the sub-regional territories cause a demographic imbalance, yielding an irregular distribution of each island's population and across municipalities within each island. Occasionally, economic centers cluster around main cities in the Azores such as Ponta Delgada (São Miguel), Angra do Heroísmo (Terceira), and Horta (Faial). It is inevitable that the major regional areas procure labor and generate more employment opportunities, with a higher amount of population qualified and working in more mature industries.

How *socioeconomic factors* influence youth employment in the Azores can be determined from several aspects. The Azores is an outermost region with specific characteristics; for example, the VAT² is lower than the rest of Portugal according to European Commission Competition Policy, affecting the youth employment rate and emigration to the bigger cities. The Azores is one of the four Portuguese regions (NUTS 2 level³) belonging to the category of less developed regions (i.e., GDP per head < 75 % of EU-27 average). Together with other outermost areas of the European Union, this region shares specific constraints whose persistence and combination seriously harm economic and social development. A great distance from the European continent, reinforced by insularity or by territorial embedding, yields to the existence of a small

² Value Added Tax, or VAT, in the European Union is a general, broadly based consumption tax assessed on the value added to goods and services.

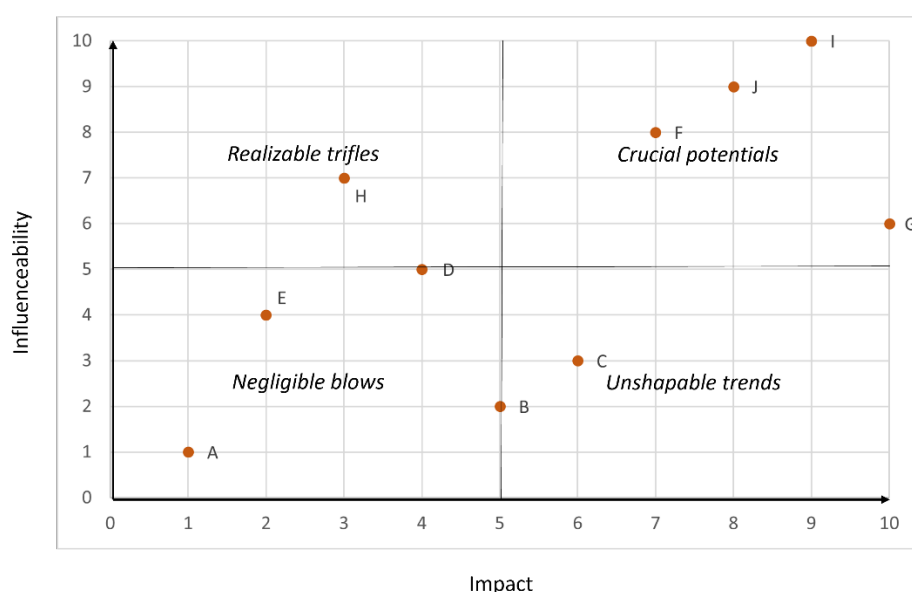
³ Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics, subdividing the territory of the European Union (EU) into regions at three different levels (NUTS 1, 2 and 3). NUTS-2 regions have between 800,000 and 3 million inhabitants.

local market with economic dependence on a limited number of products. Another critical factor for the fragmented socioeconomic landscape is that services and state infrastructures are not equally available for all islands or even some municipalities of the bigger islands (Cabral, 2021).

The impact/influenceability matrix

Based on the analysis, all ten driving forces were classified in one of the four quadrants of the impact/influenceability matrix, as shown in Figure 4 below⁴. Firstly, according to the data collected, 'negligible blows' include A. Automation, B. Globalization, D. Type of contracts and E. Informal work since these driving forces are considered to have a low impact on youth employment and are difficult to influence. Secondly, in the left upper corner of the matrix, H. Skills mismatch makes up the category of 'realizable trifles'. Thirdly, C. State of the economy has been classified in the quadrant, 'unshapable trends' since it scored high on impact and low on influenceability. Finally, four driving forces have been identified as 'crucial potentials' and, therefore, represent prospects for action: F. Poor skills of job-seekers, G. Type of education, I. Demographic factors and J. Socioeconomic factors shown in the upper right quadrant of the matrix. We explore these in more detail in the next section.

Figure 4. Impact/influenceability matrix



5. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Crucial potentials

As this report shows, young persons in the Azores face many obstacles with regard to finding and retaining employment. We investigated barriers to youth employment deriving from forces external to the labor market, such as automation and globalization as well as internal factors playing a significant role in shaping the supply of labor and those affecting the demand for workers. It should be noted that even though external factors are driven by external stimuli, including technological advances and international

⁴ For the sake of simplicity, left/lower quadrants were preferred when driving forces were astride two quadrants.

trade, governments can influence them through policies like tax incentives, tariffs, and quotas, for instance. Thanks to this potentials assessment, we identified four highly impactful and influenceable factors to provide career support for NEETs: *poor skills of job-seekers, type of education, demographic factors and socioeconomic factors*. This section describes the key findings implications and suggests potential next steps for CRESAÇOR.

Considering the region under examination in this report is located in the North Atlantic Ocean, roughly 1,600 km west of mainland Portugal, the *poor skill of job-seekers* are often a direct consequence of significant transportation obstacles, yielding low levels of education among young people in the Azores. Lack of education calls for support in guiding adult school leavers with low educational attainment through local access to learning in formal education and vocational training. Such services would allow young adults to recover interrupted studies or start new courses to reach a high school diploma. Additionally, organizations such as CRESAÇOR might want to address the poor skills of job-seekers by providing opportunities to build specific emotional capabilities, especially in terms of soft skills development that relate to work (interpersonal and communication skills, time management, and empathy, among others). Forms of this type of support might include training and coaching.

Regarding needs related to the *type of education*, it is evident in the Azores suffer from low educational levels as well as declining enrolments at the University of the Azores, which is the only public university on the archipelago. Career counselors at CRESAÇOR might find it difficult to intervene in the the demand for work. However, they can help by advising learners about potential educational paths that are aligned to the requirements of enterprises and are available on the islands.

Finally, crucial potentials are *demographic and socioeconomic factors*, which represent significant driving forces of youth unemployment in the Azores. In order to succeed in addressing these challenges, CRESAÇOR might need to undertake a multi-disciplinary long-term approach in collaboration with other stakeholders such as the government, public entities and local NGOs. These solutions also require attracting youth to stay in rural areas, decreasing the emigration ratio to other islands or municipalities, thus creating a more balanced population distribution in the Azores. Young adults should be supported in discovering social, technical, natural and economic resources around them as well as engaged in community development groups that come together to boost community-led innovations. Specialization sectors and geographical specificities are important potential in the Azores.

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APPENDIX

StayOn: a community-based and driven project

Study: Potentials assessment

Questionnaire and Interview guidelines

Introduction and instructions:

With this analysis, we intend to generate knowledge about the context in which Stay-on's participants live. More specifically, we aim to examine current and future labor market needs and identify potentials for implementing possible support solutions. All information collected during our research will be treated confidentially. The data collected will enrich impact management CLUSTER 4, *Outcome indicators Group F*. We will share the results of this study in a report which is part of activity 3.2.10, as foreseen in the project proposal.

Data collection will happen in two steps:

I Questionnaire: One person per each project partner (project partner's contact) is responsible for identifying at least ONE external stakeholder and, in consultation with him/her/them, fill the questionnaire. External stakeholders can be - but are not limited to - public officials and other public servants (e.g., mayors, council members, politicians), young people not in employment nor education and their families, youth workers, and business owners in the community or communities of interest.

II Interview: The project partner's contact should schedule an online interview with researchers at the ECSF between 23.02.2022 and 16.03.2022. During the interview, the external stakeholder should also be present. The interview will last between 30 and 60 minutes and will revolve around the information provided in the questionnaire. The interview can be held in English (or Italian) and might require the project partner's contact to help researchers with translations if the external stakeholder/s do not speak either one of these languages.

The deadline for the submission of the questionnaire is 22.02.2022.

Please, send it to: giulia.parola@ecsocfin.com and mune.tulu@ecsocfin.com

Thank you for your input and contribution to this study!

1. General information

Project partner (*insert the organization's name and country*):

Questionnaire filled on (*insert the date*):

Interview scheduled on (*insert the date*):

Project partner's contact (*insert name, surname, and contact details of the person filling the questionnaire*):

External stakeholder (*insert name, surname, organization's name, contact details of the person present in the interview, and role in the implementation phase - if any*):

2. Community or communities of interest

(*insert name of the village/s chosen for the implementation phase, indicate the geographical location within the country and the main economic activities*):

3. Driving forces of youth unemployment

The following table lists ten driving forces of youth unemployment according to literature (*read the table and think how these driving forces relate to the labor market in your community or communities of interest*):

Driving forces	Explanation
A. Automation	Process of substituting technology for human labor to perform specific tasks or jobs
B. Globalization	Migratory patterns of young people from rural areas into urban areas
C. State of the economy	General economic situation at the national and regional levels
D. Types of contracts	Typical job arrangements available for young people (e.g., temporary contracts)
E. Informal work	Working off the books can affect and distort unemployment levels as it represents a social safety net for those who are unemployed
F. Poor skills of job-seekers	This refers to poor educational systems producing adults who are not particularly highly skilled
G. Type of education	This refers to secondary education systems with fragile links with the labor market (usually, students have little-to-no practical experience and competencies)
H. Skills mismatch	Discrepancy between the skills that are sought by employers and the skills that young people possess
I. Demographic factors	Some demographic factors such as gender, disability, ethnicity have shown closer links to youth unemployment
J. Socioeconomic factors	Socioeconomic variables such as educational attainment, migration backgrounds, and household income play a role in young people's ability to access the labor market

3A. Does AUTOMATION affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3B. Does GLOBALIZATION affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3C. Does the STATE OF THE ECONOMY affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3D. Do the TYPE OF CONTRACTS affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role do they play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3E. Does INFORMAL WORK affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3F. Do the POOR SKILLS OF JOB-SEEKERS affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role do they play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3G. Does the TYPE OF EDUCATION affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3H. Does SKILLS MISMATCH affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role does it play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3I. Do DEMOGRAPHIC FACTORS affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role do they play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

3J. Do SOCIOECONOMIC FACTORS affect youth employment in your community or communities of interest? What role do they play?

(Please, answer the question and possibly add any relevant statistics or data that support it, you might include web links useful to researchers):

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4. "Impact" ranking

(Please, considering the driving forces' impact on the community or communities of interest, rank them from 1 to 10, from 1=most impactful to 10=least impactful, typing a number in the second column):

Driving forces	"Impact" ranking
A. Automation	
B. Globalization	
C. State of the economy	
D. Types of contracts	
E. Informal work	
F. Poor skills of job-seekers	
G. Type of education	
H. Skills mismatch	
I. Demographic factors	
J. Socioeconomic factors	

5. "Influenceability" ranking

(Please, considering your organization's ability to the driving forces' impact on the community or communities of interest, rank them from 1 to 10, from 1=most easily influenced to 10=least easily influenced, typing a number in the second column):

Driving forces	"Influenceability" ranking
A. Automation	
B. Globalization	
C. State of the economy	
D. Types of contracts	
E. Informal work	
F. Poor skills of job-seekers	
G. Type of education	
H. Skills mismatch	
I. Demographic factors	
J. Socioeconomic factors	

6. Final comments

(Are there any other driving forces affecting youth employment in the community of communities of interest that have not been mentioned in the questionnaire? If yes, please indicate them and add any other comments you consider useful to this study's objectives):

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Liechtenstein and Norway through the EEA and
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