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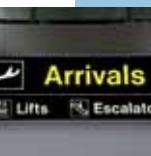
Youth employment in crisis

Best days of their lives?

Youth in Europe



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

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This issue of Foundation Focus looks at young people in Europe and particularly how they are affected by the economic crisis. Youth unemployment rates have always been higher than overall unemployment rates, but the crisis has had a dramatic effect on the job perspectives of young people. The growth of the cohort known as NEETs, those not in employment, education or training, is testament to this. There are initiatives to combat the situation, but with mixed results so far. Migration is an option, but does it help in the long run? And what about the working conditions of those who have a job? How easy is it to gain the experience and find training to move into more stable, permanent employment? All this and more in this issue of Foundation Focus.

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Editorial

It is perhaps a painful irony that as the European Union promotes the Year of Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations, the youth of Europe face some of the greatest challenges of a generation. Youth unemployment rates have reached unprecedented levels across Europe, with all Member States (bar Luxembourg) experiencing serious growth in youth unemployment figures since the onset of the recession.

The consequences are serious and far-reaching and this group is increasingly the focus of Europe's policymakers' concerns, who see the economic and social risks associated with this large cohort becoming increasingly disengaged from both work and education. According to Eurofound's most recent calculations, the lack of labour market participation of young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) is now estimated at a massive loss of about €119 billion to the European economy each year. At the same time, the social consequences cannot be quantified. The impact of a generation suffering the effects of exclusion will be played out in the political and societal developments which will shape Europe in the years to come.

In response, job creation initiatives to facilitate access to the labour market for young people are being promoted at national and at EU level with varying degrees of success. While there is a clear tendency towards greater mobility of young people within Europe and ongoing flexibility in the approach of young people to the job market and the accumulation of skills, this is not enough. A more ambitious, multi-pronged policy approach which looks at education, training and employment initiatives for all young people at different levels is required, and there are increasingly vocal calls for Europe to provide direction and leadership. As Franklin Roosevelt said in another time and another continent, 'We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.' This is the responsibility facing Europe today.

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NEETs: An urgent challenge for Europe



Young people in Europe have been hit particularly hard by the recession with regards to their employment prospects. According to the latest Eurostat figures, the youth employment rate in Europe was 33.3% in the fourth quarter of 2011, having reached an all-time low of 32.9% in the first quarter of the same year.

Equally, in March 2012, the youth unemployment rate in Europe reached 22.6%, a steep increase from the 15% pre-crisis rate in March 2008. This means that at present approximately 5.5 million young people are unemployed in Europe. While the labour market participation of young people has varied considerably at Member State level, in most of the Member States youth unemployment rates have doubled or tripled since the onset of the recession.

As telling as this data may be, traditional indicators of labour market participation are often criticised for their limited usefulness as they do not appropriately frame the situation of young people: for example, many of them are students and hence are classified as being out of the labour force. For this reason, EU policymakers have recently started to focus their attention on the NEETs. The acronym NEETs stands for those who are 'not in employment, education or training', aged typically between 15 and 24, who regardless of their educational level are disengaged from both work and education, and therefore are at a higher risk of labour market and social exclusion. The term NEETs first emerged in the

UK in the late 1980s. Since then, interest in the NEETs group has grown in all Member States, and the need to focus more on NEETs is now central to the European political debate.

Diverse group with common challenges

The size of the problem speaks for itself: according to latest Eurostat estimates for 2010, 12.8% of young people aged 15 to 24 in the EU were not in employment, education or training. This corresponds to approximately 7.5 million young people. Moreover, there are an additional 6 million 'older NEETs', between 25 and 29 years old. While NEET rates vary strongly between EU Member States, all Member States, with the exception of Luxembourg, have seen the number of NEETs increase considerably since the onset of the crisis.

But who are the NEETs? They are certainly not a homogenous population. NEETs include different groups, such as the young unemployed (short and long term), young people who are unavailable for work due to disability or family responsibilities, and young people who are disengaged from society or who are discouraged about entering the labour market due to failed previous attempts. However, despite this heterogeneity, NEETs share some crucial characteristics:

1. They are not accumulating human capital through formal channels.
2. They are more likely to face several disadvantages, such as disability, low educational levels, an immigration background or a poor family environment.
3. They are more likely to be unemployed regularly or to have a poor history of participation in the labour market.

Apart from the obvious risk that the potential of many young people is wasted in NEET status, high NEET rates can also have adverse consequences for society and the economy. Spending periods of time in NEET status is associated with a wide range of negative individual consequences, such as isolation, insecure and underpaid employment, involvement in crime, and mental and physical health problems. These negative consequences are not only a problem for the individual. Given that these negative outcomes come with a cost for our societies and economies, high NEET rates constitute a challenge for society as a whole.

The cost of NEETs

How high are these costs for our societies? As part of the Eurofound project on young people and NEETs, we sought to estimate the economic and societal costs of NEETs. The computation of economic loss due to the disengagement of NEETs from the labour market is a complex exercise. In our analysis, the costing framework included two types of costs: the missing contribution of NEETs

EU NEET rates, 2010



to society (namely, foregone earnings and unpaid tax and social contributions) and the excess in welfare transfers that NEETs are more likely to receive. Our estimate should be seen as very conservative, as additional costs related to health, crime and substance abuse are not considered.

On the basis of these assumptions, the loss for 26 Member States' economies in 2008 due to the lack of NEETs' labour market participation is estimated to be €2.3 billion per week, or around €119.2 billion per year, a number which corresponds to approximately 1% of the aggregated GDP of these Member States. The overall bill can be split between €110.4 billion in the missing contributions of NEETs to society (foregone earnings) and €8.8 billion of excess welfare transfers. At the country level, the highest yearly bills are paid by Italy (€25 billion) and France (€17 billion). However, in terms of percentage of GDP, Ireland and Bulgaria pay the highest bills (more than 2% of GDP), followed by Italy (1.7%). Conversely, the cost of NEETs is lowest for Luxembourg and Germany (0.3% and 0.6% of GDP respectively).

Risk of radicalisation

The costs of NEETs are not only economic. Concerns have been raised by policymakers about the potential consequences of NEET status and its implications for democratic engagement and civic participation of young people. It is seen as a danger that some young people may opt out from participating in civil society. The results of our analysis reveal that NEETs, and in particular the subgroup of the unemployed, stand out in having less trust in institutions and a lower level of political and social participation. Empirical evidence confirms that NEETs as a group, and especially the young unemployed, are at a higher risk of disaffection and more likely to withdraw from society. On this basis, the concerns of policymakers about the social implications of NEET status for democratic engagement seem to be fully justified. Recent examples of youth demonstrations in the UK, Spain and Italy have highlighted the scale of the problem and the risks of not engaging with this group. The growth of far-right movements in Scandinavian and continental countries which are actively targeting disaffected young people constitute a further warning sign for future developments.

**Massimiliano Mascherini and
Anja Meierkord**

INTERVIEW WITH LUCA SCARPIELLO

'There is a lot of talk today about young people needing to be more flexible, and that this will solve the unemployment issues facing them. This is simply not true.'

The European Youth Forum works towards increasing employment opportunities and improving working conditions for young Europeans, aiming to guarantee their social inclusion and autonomy, with adequate levels of social protection, and in an environment supporting their health and well-being.

Eurofound spoke to Luca Scarpiello, Vice-President of the European Youth Forum, to explore the forum's perspectives and its work on youth issues that are high on the political agendas across the EU Member States.

What are the biggest social challenges facing Europe's youth today?

The biggest challenge facing Europe today is to find the means to unleash the potential of the most skilled generation ever, a generation of clever men and women that have studied more than any other, but who during the current economic climate are hampered in putting all that knowledge to use.

In Europe, we need to work together to break this vicious circle of low social and economic trust that the young are faced with.

First and foremost, we need to create enough jobs for young people. In my mind, Europe cannot just focus on supply-side economic stimuli.

Secondly, we need to make sure that the transition phase is as efficient as possible for everyone. Boundaries between education and employment are getting increasingly blurry, and we want to cement the notion that it is worthwhile to allow people to continue to work while studying, and to continue to study while working.



We need to look seriously at involuntary transitions, of which there are high levels in all Member States, but primarily in southern Europe, since they are really destructive of people's self-confidence. In this, young people are the weakest part of the chain.

In your mind, are European social policymakers tackling these challenges in a constructive way?

Youth unemployment is a component of the solutions for economic cohesion in Europe, but I think social policymakers are currently not tackling the youth unemployment part.

The bottom line is that policymakers must understand it is fundamental to invest in EU-wide policies for job creation for young workers, both in terms of money and experiences, and coordination.

There is a lot of talk today about young people needing to be more flexible, and that this will solve the unemployment issues facing them. This is simply not true. European social policymakers have to stop thinking like this.

Policymakers need to agree and communicate an overall plan and vision of growth in Europe, and they then need

to make resources available to realise this ambition. This can only be done at EU level, in a coordinated and collaborative fashion.

And we need to make policymakers act now. After all, the Fiscal Compact was put in place in 20 days. Why can't we find an agreement on a solution for Europe's youth equally fast?

How do you feel that your organisation can help young people across Europe?

We work on two sides, first at the member organisation level, where we lead a consortium of grassroots organisations at local, regional and national level. What youth organisations are doing every day is enormous, not often talked about, to help create jobs.

Second, we work at EU level, where we not only represent the voice of youth on what has to be done, but also help put ambition and vision into all initiatives that affect young people in Europe.

We are adamant in our opinion that the European Union is something more than institutions, and that we want people power to instigate and drive change, not institutions.

Can you provide us with examples of work you do that help the situation for young unemployed people?

We are working on a charter on the rights of interns, which is aimed at providing a framework for quality internship experiences and preventing young people getting stuck in transition. People stuck in internships, which represent a kind of sub-labour market with no or low pay and bad working conditions, is a growing problem which we want to address.

We are also proposing a youth guarantee, which is a policy measure that aims to ensure that no young person is out of employment, education or training for a period of more than four months. The European Youth Forum believes that a youth guarantee can be an efficient and proactive approach to overcoming the disproportionate unemployment among young people and contributing to their social inclusion.

Central to all our proposals are arrangements that benefit all sides. Therefore, we are now also working hard on a radical overhaul of contractual arrangements that exist today. Across Europe, there are over 150 different kinds of contractual agreements, which does

not make it easier for anyone. We have shown that simplifying these, while taking consideration of the most precarious jobs as well as improving apprenticeship contracts, has been successful in a number of countries.

What is the situation regarding training and upskilling opportunities for young people across Europe? Are there countries which perform better than others, and if so, which ones?

One of the biggest mistakes the EU makes today is having an economy-only perspective on the job–skills match. We need to focus on individuals that are able to update their skills over the course of their lives, and we believe strongly that we need people that are protagonists in their own learning, not in some kind of a top-down approach.

There is a lot of discussion about youth and migration: what is your message and objective regarding that?

It is clear that the crisis has exacerbated the situation, making it more difficult for young people to be mobile on the European labour market. We need to encourage policymakers to open up borders for innovation and study, to invite young people to come and stay, and to make sure they can be integrated into our labour markets. Combining social and economic objectives like this is the only recipe for growth, one that Europe so badly needs right now.

What is your vision for your organisation and your objectives in the medium term? What do you want to achieve in the five-year perspective?

In five years' time, we want Europe to exist, first and foremost. Currently, the trend is negative and Europe is in danger of imploding over its austerity measures.

Five years is a long way away, so we would rather focus on the short-term perspective.

In six months' time we want to implement the charter of rights of interns, to give a signal that Europe cares about you, your experience and not only your economic value.

We also want our youth guarantee scheme approved, as well as an EU budget that is supportive of youth inclusion in labour market.

What we are proposing is not only good for young people, but also for Europe, to make important breakthroughs as a way out of the crisis. At the end of the day,

young people don't demand a lot, these are all simple and worthwhile implementable solutions we are asking for.

Interview: Måns Mårtensson

Job creation initiatives for young people

The consequences and the costs related to being NEET (not in employment, education or training) call for new policy action. In response to the increasingly negative developments in the labour market for young people, EU Member States in recent years have been actively engaged in designing and implementing policy measures aimed at increasing their employability and labour market participation.

As NEETs are a highly diverse group, composed of different subgroups with different needs, each subgroup requires distinct forms of policy interventions in order to effectively engage them with the labour market. These policy measures can be grouped into measures relating to education, measures facilitating the transition from school to work, and measures to improve their employability.

Ensuring that all young people are able to complete their education is the first cornerstone of an effective youth employment policy. An education system that helps children from all backgrounds realise their full potential is vital for continued prosperity and reduces labour market exclusion among young people. Indeed, reducing the share of early school-leavers to below 10% is one of the five headline targets in the Europe 2020 strategy. Education policies may aim to tackle the risks linked to the cumulative processes which lead to school drop-outs; examples include focusing on specific



at-risk groups (Career Start in Finland) or on specific geographical (disadvantaged) areas (Priority Education in France), or may introduce an alternative to the existing mainstream education (School Work Alternation in Italy).

However, there will always be some young people who drop out of education early. These early school-leavers are at a disadvantage in the labour market due to their lack of formal qualifications. Initiatives to reintegrate young people into education or training vary their approach according to the level of support their target groups need. For example, early school-leavers from more hard-to-reach and vulnerable groups cannot be rushed on the path back to education or employment, so projects give time to solve their personal issues first (Production Schools in Austria and Youthreach in Ireland).

When young people have completed their education, it is crucial to help them in the transition to employment. Unsuccessful or protracted transitions can have a scarring effect that undermines their future career and employment outcomes. Specific measures support young people at this critical time by enabling them to make informed career decisions or by supporting them to access employment opportunities. Both the Finnish and Swedish Youth Guarantees oblige public employment services to offer a personalised needs assessment and a place in employment, education or in activation within a guaranteed time period to young people registered as job-seekers. Youth guarantees not only help young people to make more informed decisions and improve the quality and speed of the services provided, they also encourage immediate action to prevent disengagement. Other approaches aim at reforming the services available to young people, offering one-stop shops to address all their needs in a single agency (Connexions in England and Navigator Centres in Sweden).

Skill mismatches, a lack of transversal competences (competences that can be applied across contexts) or a lack of work experience can hinder the capability of young people to find suitable and stable employment. Measures to improve their employability focus either on acquiring specific vocational skills



through work-based learning, or on improving their general level of education and skills in preparation for employment. Apprenticeship schemes have proved to be extremely successful in smoothing the transition into work for young people. In Austria, non-company-based apprenticeships were introduced to overcome significant gaps between the demand for and supply of apprenticeship places and to provide a safety net for those unable to find a place with a specific company. They allow young people to complete a full apprenticeship while based in a vocational training centre, combined with work experience with different employers.

Young people may also face practical and logistical barriers to entering the labour market. Many countries have introduced a variety of incentives (such as tax system reliefs, subsidies and non-wage labour cost cuts) in order to encourage employers to recruit or train young people and to create additional jobs for them (Start Card in Hungary). Some countries have introduced specific measures to promote youth entrepreneurship and self-employment, providing special services for young people willing to set up their own business. Finally, to remove logistical and practical barriers to youth employment, almost all countries have introduced geographical mobility grants and other special measures aimed at young people with special needs or coming from a disadvantaged or immigrant background.

EU Member States have introduced a wide variety of combined approaches to equip young people with the right competencies and skills required on the labour market, while creating new and better opportunities for them. Most Member States have diversified their initiatives according to the different characteristics of the NEET subgroups. However, evaluations of these programmes do not yet exist or have not become available yet, and are not systematically carried out. Assessing the effectiveness of such initiatives is crucial, especially in times of austerity when a more efficient use of resources is essential.

**Lidia Salvatore and
Massimiliano Mascherini**

Why job quality for young workers matters

'The young feel tired at the end of an action, the old at the beginning.'
T. S. Eliot

The challenges currently facing young people are not new and have received ongoing attention over recent decades. High unemployment, long and often difficult transitions from education into work, and a higher likelihood of having temporary employment contracts are among the issues most often discussed.

These difficulties have been severely exacerbated by the economic and financial crisis, so it is not surprising that debates on youth employment and unemployment have sprung up again in disparate settings, from dinner table conversations to political decision-making in the European Union.

One should not forget that this youngest cohort of the working population is a heterogeneous group, which includes those who are trying to secure their first job, those trying to find a new job, and those trying to keep the job they have. The opportunities available to young workers and their strategies to make the most of those opportunities are impacted heavily by economic cycles. They are the population group that is likely to be first and most affected during economic downturns, by dismissals and by limited opportunities for employment due to their lack of experience. As a result, young workers, new entrants in particular, are at risk of suffering the long-term scarring effects of delays in finding a first job and long spells of unemployment.

Central questions at the moment are: how to create jobs, how to make sure that young people are adequately skilled for those jobs, and how to make sure that young people find a job that matches their skills. Finding the right answers to those questions is crucial to solving the problem of youth unemployment.

Payback from investing in job quality

With the strong focus on youth unemployment in the current policy debate, questions around the working conditions of those young women and men that do have a job appear to have been neglected. However, the development of adequate measures and policies to support the future social and economic development of the EU requires ongoing attention to the quality of work of all workers, including young people, at times of crisis as much as at times of stability. The more attention that is given to the quality of work at the beginning of employment and throughout our working lives, the more likely that the society will benefit from people's contributions as workers and also as citizens. The reverse also holds true – not having good quality of work not only affects working life but also people's health and engagement with society.

The quality of work at a given moment in time has an impact on an individual's capacity to perform any sort of activity, paid or unpaid, in the future. It determines the level at which those individuals will be able to contribute to

their communities and society as a whole, through professional or social activities at later stages of their lives.

The question therefore is not only about the quantity and content (the skills and competences required) of jobs, or about the support young people need to enter employment (such as active labour market policies), it is also about the working conditions they experience because these influence the quality and duration of their active life.

What the research shows

Findings from the fifth European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) illustrate that some aspects of the working conditions of young workers (under 25) differ considerably from those of older workers. To some extent, these differences can be explained by structural factors. Workers under 25 are less likely to have finished third-level education. A relatively large proportion work part time, often combined with education. Partly because of this, young workers are highly overrepresented in the wholesale and retail sector; however, if we look only at those who work full time, we still find a comparatively large proportion in this sector. Young full-time workers are also slightly overrepresented in health and industry. In terms of occupations, young workers – regardless of whether they work full time or part time – are overrepresented among service and sales workers, craft and related trade workers and elementary occupations. However, even when controlling for country, sector,



occupation, working part time or full time, and having a third level degree or not, significant differences remain.

Firstly, the EWCS shows that younger workers are more likely to have non-permanent employment contracts, and recent studies show that this likelihood is increasing. Young workers are also more likely not to have any contract at all. However, whereas young workers enjoy less job security – they are much more likely to think they will lose their job in the next six months than older workers – they seem to be much more optimistic about being able to find a similar job. They are also more confident about the career prospects their current job offers.

Although young workers are less likely to work more than 48 hours per week, and are also less likely to work nights than older workers, they are much more likely to have working time arrangements that are completely set by their employers, not allowing them any flexibility.

Fewer skills, higher risks

Looking at the self-reported fit between skills held and those required for work, young workers are more likely to be faced with a skills mismatch than older workers, mainly because they are more likely to report being under-skilled (see Figure 1).

This is not really surprising, as they are likely to have limited experience in their job and to have a lot to learn still.

Nevertheless, this perception by young workers does raise questions about the availability and quality of the support they receive, in terms of mentoring and training, in making up for the discrepancy between the demands of the work and the skills and competences they hold.

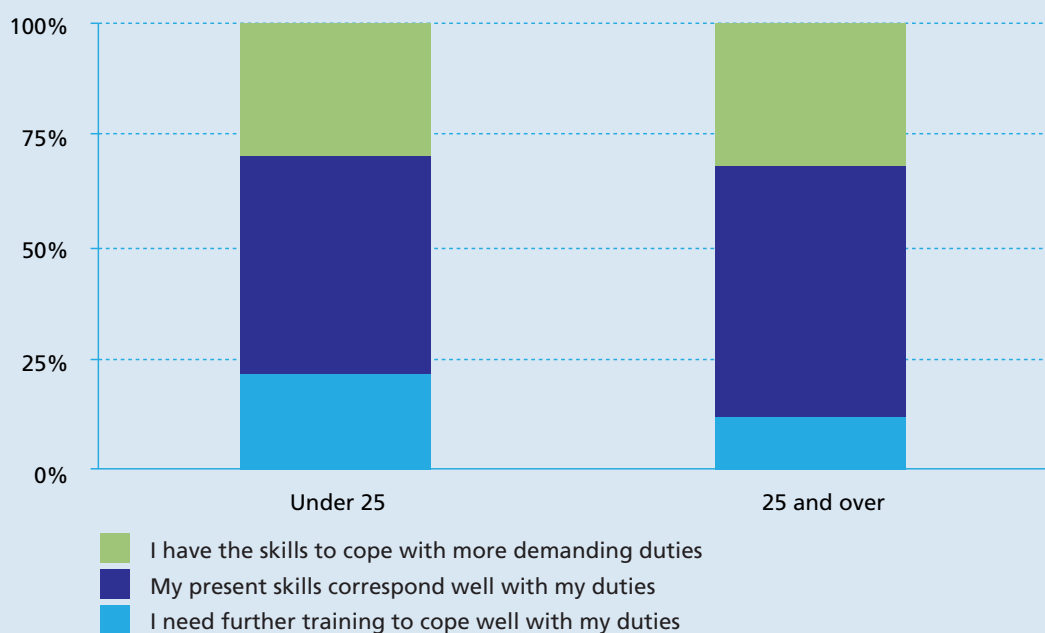
In the debate about jobs for young workers, the risks to which workers are subject at work also arise. Young workers are more likely to be exposed to above-average levels of posture-related risks, biological and chemical risks, and ambient risks (also known as physical risks) than older workers. Moreover, young workers are faced with higher levels of job intensity and lower levels of job autonomy than older workers, factors which place them at greater risk of suffering from work-related stress. In addition, young workers are more likely to be exposed to adverse social behaviour than older workers, further increasing their exposure to psychosocial risk.

Given these high levels of exposure to both physical and psychosocial risks, it is of concern that young workers are much less likely to have recently raised work-related problems with an employee representative than older workers. Interestingly, though, young workers that have been subjected to adverse social behaviour are equally likely to report having raised work-related problems with an employee representative as older workers.

Given the framework in which the existing debates are taking place, the solutions currently being considered to alleviate the effects of the crisis on young people might deal with the short-term issue of youth unemployment. However, excluding quality of work from the debate runs the risk of perpetuating or even generating problems with regard to labour force and social participation, and may result in future costs to society, passing the buck to future generations. We should ask ourselves: can we afford to disregard the importance of quality of work and employment in the first years of people's working lives?

Jorge Cabrita and Gijs van Houten

Figure 1: Skills match to job for younger and older workers



Sustainable working conditions



'It takes time to become young.'
Pablo Picasso

Sustainable work demands good working conditions for workers of all ages. Well-being at work is the basis for maintaining people's fitness for the job at each stage of their careers and achieving longer working lives. If the European Union is serious about meeting the objectives set in the Europe 2020 strategy, sustainable work and employment should be given high priority as they are a precondition for meeting the objective of high employment.

The experience of work is never neutral

Work and employment can be a source of opportunities and growth for people. Indeed, work contributes to the well-being of workers, improves their health, shapes their identity, allows them to develop new skills, delineates their non-work life and earns them a living. But work, when it is of poor quality, can harm workers' health, sometimes irreversibly, and limit their capacity to participate in paid employment. In the event of unemployment, workers whose skills are outdated may not easily find another job with the same salary. Given the current downward trend in job creation, they might not find a job at all. Workers who have caring duties and cannot find solutions for the care of their children or dependent relatives will simply not be able to hold down a job. As clusters of unfavourable working conditions tend to occur disproportionately in some groups, the issue is not only about

competitiveness but also about gender equality, social justice and inclusion.

Ensuring that work protects the well-being of workers is a longstanding challenge. But in this time of change and economic crisis, in a world more open and more flexible, where company and worker strategies are probably more individualised and less predictable, questions about how to make work sustainable and rewarding need to be asked and answered again, from the start of each person's career.

One answer lies in understanding the role that work plays across a person's career and life, and how it impacts on their decision to retire early or to continue to work until retirement age. It will also impact on their capacity to contribute to employment even after retirement. Over the last 20 years, the European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS) has monitored the conditions that enhance the well-being of workers and has assessed the sustainability of work. The message is clear: improving working conditions is key, and a comprehensive improvement of working conditions matters. For young people in particular, bridging skills gaps, mentoring, upskilling and generally smoothing transitions from education to work play an important role to ensure that they get off to a good start.

The level of job demands and autonomy affect workers' perceptions of how sustainable they think their jobs are, measured by their belief that they will be able to do the same job at age 60. Workers in low-strain jobs (with lower levels of demands and less scope for decision-making at the same time) and in active jobs (with higher levels of

demands and scope for decision-making) report higher levels of sustainability than others. Clearly, autonomy promotes well-being, while work intensity erodes it. Less physically demanding working conditions and a high level of social support from colleagues and managers protect the welfare of workers. Job insecurity is associated with lower levels of job sustainability. Work-life balance is important and positively associated with job sustainability. The ability to take time off easily and having some autonomy in relation to taking breaks are also important. On the negative side, experiencing discrimination, violence, abuse, bullying or harassment has scarring effects and may result in a premature exit from the labour market.

Developing one's skills on the job as well as being involved in changes in work organisation and improvements at the workplace are associated with a higher likelihood of reporting job sustainability.

This should be good news to us as these working conditions are also associated with higher motivation, engagement and workplace innovation.

The answers to sustainable careers may be local, sectoral, regional and national, but the debate between governments, employer organisations and trade unions can benefit from a European approach, which offers both the opportunity to learn from experiences and the policy tools that monitor of quality of work and employment.

Agnès Parent-Thirion

Active inclusion policies for young people with disabilities: Where are we at?

Young people are facing multiple challenges to enter and stay in the labour market, but for those with disabilities, the issues are even more complex. One of the main risks is that of social exclusion, of not being able to fully participate in life, of becoming dependent on the welfare system rather than being able to work and chose a path of their own.

If this occurs early in life, it increases the risk of permanent exclusion considerably. While there are several factors at work that do not allow for simple solutions, Eurofound

research has identified approaches that seem to create more inclusive pathways.

The research was carried out in 11 countries and looked at how policies and programmes of active inclusion serve young people who suffer from dual disadvantages of lack of work experience and a health problem or disability. This extra disadvantage can be clearly seen when comparing the employment levels of young people experiencing health problems to young people in general – they are consistently lower. Of even greater concern are the



inactivity rates of young people in the 25 to 34 age bracket, which are almost 80% higher for those who report health problems or disabilities than for those without, with large differences across the Member States.

Inclusion approaches seem to be the most appropriate policy instrument to tackle the social exclusion of young people as they address the multiple dimensions of the problem and put an emphasis on a joined-up approach to the services offered. However, Eurofound research shows that active inclusion approaches are at different stages of development across the 11 Member States analysed.

In 2008, the European Commission adopted a recommendation on the active inclusion of people most excluded from the labour market, promoting a comprehensive strategy based on the integration of three social policy pillars: adequate income support, inclusive labour markets, and access to quality services. Currently the European Commission is about to publish a staff working paper which will assess the progress the Member States have made since the publication of the communication.

Well-developed active inclusion approaches

In Denmark and the Netherlands the need for integrated solutions towards active inclusion has been formally acknowledged, and our research suggested that substantial effort had been invested in creating more flexible and integrated responses.

In Denmark, it is stated policy that all young people should be able to make use

Broad spectrum of active inclusion measures

Member State	Legislation
Finland	Act on Rehabilitation Benefits and Rehabilitation Allowance Benefits from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland, 2005
	Act on Disability Allowance, 2007
France	Disability Law, 2005 (Law for the Equality of Rights and Opportunities, Participation and Citizenship of Persons with Disabilities)
Ireland	National Disability Strategy, 2004
Portugal	Repair Scheme of Work Accidents and Occupational Diseases, including Professional Rehabilitation and Reintegration, 2009
	Ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of People with Disabilities and additional protocol, 2009
	National Strategy for Disability 2011–2013, 2010
	Law on Prevention, Habilitation, Rehabilitation and Participation of Persons with Disabilities, 2004
	Programmes
Germany	National Plan of Action (Nationaler Aktionsplan der Bundesregierung zur Umsetzung der UN-Behindertenrechtskonvention, NAP) 2010
Ireland	Active Inclusion Pilot
Portugal	SIM-PD Information and Mediation Service for People with Disabilities
Slovakia	National Programme on the Development of Living Conditions for People with Disabilities in All Living Areas

of opportunities in society and to create meaningful lives for themselves with complete personal responsibility. The opportunities and personal resources of disadvantaged young people are to be improved through early intervention and better and more effective targeting of assistance.

The three government departments involved in active inclusion policies in the Netherlands are the Department of Social Affairs and Work, which covers most of the policy areas in relation to income support and inclusive labour market measures for young people with health problems or disabilities, and the Departments of Health and of Education, which are responsible for the provision of quality health services and lifelong learning.

The commitment to active inclusion in Finland was less evident at policy level. However, the inclusion agenda is based on a combination

of employment activation, adequate income and access to supporting services, which is well developed. Ongoing social security reform aims to increase the use of income support as an incentive in the inclusion process. Many of the active inclusion measures are general measures, not targeted at a particular social group. The employment office, municipal social services and the social insurance institution provide special services in a one-stop shop to the long-term unemployed and to those who need multi-professional support. Labour market support funding is shared equally between the state and the municipalities in order to incentivise local government to promote employment. The use of intermediate labour market measures, such as subsidised temporary employment and social enterprises to create work opportunities for marginalised individuals, has increased.

Countries in development phase

In other countries, a commitment to active inclusion was clearly signalled at a policy level, but progress toward a functioning system of integrated measures across the social policy pillars was relatively slow. Explicit references to active inclusion were somewhat evident at policy level in Ireland, France and the UK; however, all three countries face challenges in effective implementation.

In other countries progress towards more coordinated and integrated approaches across the domains of active inclusion was evident but clearly at the initial stages. This was the situation in Germany and Portugal, where implementing the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was more influential than the concept of active inclusion.

Examples of good practice:

The Specialists

The Specialists is a Danish company that bases its business model on employing people with autism spectrum disorder (ASD), who face obstacles in mainstream education and training and in holding down a job. The Specialists directly hires core employees with ASD and provides client companies with business services on market terms.

There is a range of routine tasks that match the specialist skills of a person with ASD (including accountancy, software development and quality control). The company takes the view that ASD conditions are associated with abilities that are of special value in specific work settings:

- the capacity to concentrate for long periods;
- the capacity to focus on details;
- the capacity to engage in rule-based tasks.

The Specialists was set up with private capital in the belief that the concept is strong enough to succeed on market terms. As the company's consultants provide an equally good and often better level of service than competitors, similar salaries can be obtained. The concept is now marketed all over Denmark and in other countries, with 40% of the company's clients entering open employment on full wages as IT consultants with the company.

The active inclusion element of the business model includes providing an adequate income, giving employees the opportunity to work within their capabilities, and providing access to services if needed. The company provides employment in the open labour market, and employees are trained to mainstream standards.

Examples of good practice:

The Vangrail project

The foundation Sterk in Werk (Strong in Work) in the Netherlands runs the Vangrail (Guardrail) project, which helps school drop-outs (aged 16 and over) in their transition to work. Its clients are under the care of remedial education centres for young people with mild to moderate mental disabilities. All have behavioural problems as a result of a moderate mental disorder, often in combination with disorders in the autism spectrum, hyperactivity (ADHD) or psychiatric disorders. The philosophy of the Vangrail project is that vocational training and work in open employment will result in better mental health. The programme is financed by the social security agency UWV.

Young clients entering the Vangrail project attend dual programmes consisting of intensive personal support by teams of professionals in the areas of participation in society, independent living, mental healthcare, education, vocational training and employment. Sterk in Werk specialises in vocational training and employment support. Different professionals from the reintegration and remedial education centres work together making plans and adjusting transition programmes to the needs of individual clients. In addition, UWV officials take part in planning the individual programmes; parents are consulted as are other healthcare professionals involved with the client. Clients' progress in behaviour and communication in their living, training and working environments is carefully observed. Problems signalled by a professional in one area are directly communicated to the other professionals in the team surrounding the young person, so everyone knows what is happening and can deal with it before other problems arise.

Examples of good practice:

The SDC–IBM project

The Constitution of Slovakia gives everyone the right to a free choice of profession and training. There are many young people with health problems or disabilities who are able and want to work in the open labour market. Companies might like to employ them but do not know how to find them, and these young people often lack the confidence to apply for work in companies operating in the open labour market. An example of how to tackle these obstacles is the cooperation between NGOs and 'tigers' – the leading companies in the IT sector. NGOs can recruit disabled people according to the requirements of the company. They provide them with training based on their needs and prepare them for work in the company. This cooperation helps to increase the opportunities for young disabled people to succeed in the open labour market. Cooperation between the Slovak Disability Council (SDC) and IT company IBM has existed for a number of years. Because of the positive results of this collaboration, IBM plans to implement the same project in other countries. In 2010, the SDC used this model to collaborate with another company in the sector.

IBM presents the SDC with its requirements for potential employees with disabilities. The SDC looks for candidates through its member organisations, universities, secondary schools and Offices of Labour, Social Affairs and Family. Candidates who are interested send their CVs to the SDC. Suitable candidates then are chosen by representatives of the SDC and IBM and are invited for an interview. After the interview, the selected candidates can begin to attend the training courses.

During the courses, the IT, English language and communication skills of the future employees are developed alongside training in communication and self-presentation.

Active inclusion less developed

Finally, there were countries where the principles of active inclusion were hard to find at the policy level or in practice. There was little evidence to suggest that Poland had adopted an active inclusion approach. The general legislative framework in Slovakia has only minimum provisions relevant for the active inclusion of young people with health problems or disabilities. The Slovak framework for active inclusion is specified in separate sectoral policies with only limited linkages. Policy development in Spain has been greatly influenced by NGOs that represent people with disabilities, but there is no specific reference to active inclusion.

Integrated implementation of programmes and policies

An analysis of the country reports was carried out to gain an insight into the extent to which legislation, policy and programmes were designed to achieve coordinated and integrated actions. The analysis included legislation and programmes relevant to people with disabilities or young people in general and not only those targeted at young people with health problems or disabilities. The focus was upon the aspects of active inclusion that were most frequently addressed by specific laws and programmes.

Anna Ludwinek

Youth mobility: Issues and prospects

One outcome of the ongoing economic crisis in Europe is that migration and labour mobility have become more prominent as issues. In countries where unemployment has risen significantly, leaving the country is considered a valid and sometimes necessary step to finding employment.

Young people tend to be more mobile than the other age groups. This has always been the case for intra-EU mobility. However, since the latest two waves of enlargement in 2004 and 2007, the magnitude of youth mobility has become even more pronounced: in 2010, 70% of working-age migrants from the countries of the first wave of enlargement were below the age of 35 years. A question on mobility intentions in the 2011 Eurobarometer survey of young people confirmed this pattern. It showed that young people from central and eastern European countries of both waves of enlargement would be more willing to work in another EU Member State than the EU27 average.

As opportunities abroad in once-booming economies (like Spain or Ireland) disappear and prospects in their countries of origin improve, a growing number of workers are returning to their home countries. Eurofound's research project on return migration reveals that young people are also overrepresented among the returnees compared to the non-mobile population – another, more indirect indication of their importance to mobility in general. Mobile workers leaving their home country are mostly in their twenties; returnees, however, seem to be somewhat older on average. According to Eurostat data, the median age of nationals returning to their home country was over 30 in several Member States in 2008. Eurofound research confirmed this tendency in selected central and eastern European Member States (Hungary, Latvia, Poland and Romania). In Hungary, half of those who returned to the country in the period of 2008–2010



were aged between 30 and 45 years. In the case of Romanians returning from Spain, the same trend could be observed. In Latvia, although most (two-thirds) of the returnees were younger than 35 years, the share of those who were older than that was nevertheless significant. Polish returnees, however, appear to be younger, with people under the age of 30 dominating. The fact that the majority of returnees is older is understandable since most of them have spent some time abroad before returning to their home country (in our research returnees were defined as those who spent at least one year abroad).

Another question explored in our research was what kind of expertise returnees acquired abroad, and whether and to what extent they were able to use it in their home labour market when they returned. The findings showed that, on the whole, the experience of highly skilled returnees was valued, whereas this was usually not the case with the low-skilled mobile workers. This may be related to the lack of expertise the latter acquired abroad. For example, if they held jobs below their level of qualification, which is often the case with young mobile workers, they may find it difficult to be integrated into their home labour market on their return, especially when they lack prior work experience in their home country or have never been in a job matching their qualification. This is linked to another important topic that Eurofound plans to further explore, namely to what extent labour mobility could ease the difficult process of school-to-work transition. Our research (due to be published in July 2012) indicates that the new opportunities offered by the free movement of labour could make this process smoother for highly skilled young people, whereas low- or even medium-skilled young people could encounter difficulties also in this regard.

Klára Fóti

Youth employment in crisis



Youth unemployment remains one of the most pressing challenges facing EU policymakers. In some EU states, such as Cyprus, Greece, Ireland and Spain, youth unemployment has returned to the highs of the 1970s, rapidly becoming a scourge that blights whole families.

Two-thirds of Member States report massive youth unemployment at above 20%, according to Eurostat. In six Member States, rates are between 10% and 20%. In another 13, rates range from 20% to 30%, and in 5 the rate is over 30% (Greece, Ireland, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain). In only three Member States is youth unemployment below 10% (Austria, the Netherlands and Germany). These are the figures for young people defined as those falling into the 16 to 24 age group; there is also a discernible problem for the larger age group of those between 16 and 30, and a number of EU initiatives are aimed at this larger group – in Spain and Cyprus, for example.

Matching young people with existing jobs continues to be problematic everywhere. Even in countries where unemployment is low, the percentage of unemployed young people is almost always twice that of total unemployment. The EU seeks to increase opportunities in education, training and work experience for young job-seekers and to support them in making the transition from education to work. It also seeks to decrease education drop-out rates. The latter is a serious task; the EU compares unfavourably with the United States and

Japan in the prevention of early school-leaving. EU policy initiatives such as Youth on the Move add to traditional measures such as apprenticeships by removing obstacles to mobility, increasing visibility of vacancies and supporting initiatives for young entrepreneurs. These measures jointly applied will complement the concrete on-the-spot initiatives of individual EU Member States.

National initiatives

Member States have developed many measures to combat unemployment that reflect particular national conditions and generally supplement existing measures. Ireland, for example, introduced a national internship scheme providing 5,000 work experience placements in the private, public and voluntary sectors. This time-limited scheme provides work experience placements for six to nine months and includes an additional weekly supplement of €50 to existing social welfare entitlements. The initiative is aimed at young people ‘not in employment, education or training’ (NEETs), and while it is progressive, the numbers looking for work continue to present a daunting problem. In Spain, the government is encouraging employers to maintain recruitment with reductions in national insurance contributions for a year. Employees are being offered a monthly supplement of €400 in order to assist them in re-qualifying using retraining initiatives, but the payment is limited to six months’

duration. In Greece emergency measures deeply affected existing collective agreements, which in turn have affected young workers. Under the first round of emergency regulations, employers are now allowed to hire young workers at lower rates than previously. For those under 25, employers may pay 80% of the national minimum wage, and for those between 15 and 18, the rate is 70%. The UK has recently frozen minimum wages for workers aged 16–20 with the aim of promoting employment of this age group. Trade unions have criticised the decision which they see as exploitative, while employers have welcomed it.

Some EU countries have concentrated on training initiatives and apprenticeships for young people. In Italy, the substitution of an apprenticeship for the final compulsory year of school represents a practical initiative with a somewhat retro flavour to support entry to the labour market. It allows for an apprenticeship payment that is a proportion of adult rates, and a strict ratio between numbers of workers on full-time contracts and apprenticeships must be maintained. In the Italian case, the European Social Fund is used to promote new apprenticeships. Here, the social partners have given broad support to the measures, especially trade unions, since many of their suggestions have been integrated into the approved measures.

In Cyprus, youth unemployment is comparatively low in EU terms. Yet it is at its highest since 1974. There,

government measures with social partner involvement include state subsidies to promote re-entry to the labour market for those under 29 years. These amount to supplements of 60% to 65% on wages, with a particular emphasis on the badly hit construction sector.

Particular problems exist in other Member States. In Poland, 'junk' jobs (jobs with temporary contracts or contracts that are not covered by labour laws) for young people remain a persistent problem. In Hungary, emigration threatens the economy through the effective export of the state's investment in education and training at considerable cost to the country. More than 3,000 doctors have left Hungary since, according to trade unions, they are paid wages that 'compare unfavourably with those of fast food workers'. Working conditions are also said to be poor. As a consequence, a supplement of €344 has been granted to young doctors who commit to remaining and working in the country for 10 years after qualifying.

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The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is a tripartite EU body, whose role is to provide key actors in social policymaking with findings, knowledge and advice drawn from comparative research. Eurofound was established in 1975 by Council Regulation EEC No. 1365/75 of 26 May 1975.