



# Working conditions of young entrants to the labour market

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This report is available in electronic format only.

*Young workers across the EU, particularly young labour market entrants, are faced with major employment difficulties. High unemployment rates and poorer working conditions for young people have added new negative dimensions to the traditional problems of this group in accessing work. This report looks at the current working conditions of Europe's young labour market entrants and how these conditions have evolved in recent years, especially during the crisis. It finds a greater prevalence of non-standard forms of employment among young workers.*

## **Introduction**

Young European workers in general and young labour market entrants in particular are being confronted with significant employment difficulties. These are reflected in high unemployment rates and poorer working conditions for young people, adding new negative dimensions to the traditional problems of this group in accessing work. As discussed in a [2008 report \(332 KB PDF\)](#) from the [SPReW project](#) and a [2010 report \(892 KB PDF\)](#) from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD](#)), these new dimensions may incidentally result in future costs to society. In this context, the European institutions, the EU Member States and social partners are seeking to increase opportunities in education, training and work experience for young job-seekers, supporting them in their transition from education to work.

## **Main aims of report**

This comparative analytical report (CAR) describes and characterises the current working conditions of young European entrants to the labour market and the evolution of these working conditions in recent years, especially in the light of the current economic crisis. The report's objectives are to:

- analyse the working conditions of young entrants to the labour market, identifying and reporting possible differences in relation to other working groups with a longer working experience within the labour market;
- identify and characterise possible differences in the working conditions of young entrants to the labour market in the diverse EU Member States;
- identify and report possible differences in the working conditions of young entrants to the labour market according to their personal characteristics such as age range, gender and level of educational attainment, and their occupational characteristics such as sector, occupation and company size;
- analyse the evolution of the working conditions of young labour market entrants, identifying and characterising changes compared with in the recent past, considering especially the impact of the economic crisis;
- describe and depict the main causes, both general and specific, behind these differences and changes in the working conditions of young workers;
- analyse comparatively initiatives taken by European institutions and bodies, national governments and social partners to improve the working conditions of young entrants to the labour market.

## **Definition of young entrants to the labour market**

This report focuses on the specific group 'young entrants to the labour market'. This group could be defined as any young person aged between 15 and 30 years who has recently entered the labour market (that is, they have been in work for less than one or two years), with a relative independence from their age, their type of employment contract (self-employed or employed, permanent or temporary), and young workers who study as an additional activity. However, this definition excludes students whose educational programme includes some paid working activity

(for example, apprenticeships or job placement as part of a university degree), as well as unemployed young people, even if they are actively looking for a job.

Due to the limited information on working conditions among this specific group of young entrants (see Table 1 for details of national studies), this report also uses a ‘proxy’ definition of ‘young entrant to the labour market’ as anyone less than 30 years old who is in employment, irrespective of the number of years in the labour market. Unemployed young people are again excluded from this definition).

**Table 1: Definitions of ‘young entrants to the labour market’ in national studies**

	<b>Study</b>	<b>Definition of labour market entrant adopted</b>
<b>AT</b>	Austrian Working Climate Index ( <a href="#">WCI</a> ), ad hoc exploitation	Young entrants up to 30 years old who have not been in the labour market for more than two years
<b>BE</b>	<a href="#">WSE Report 2009 (in Dutch)</a>	All people in the age group 15–24 years old who were a student in 2006 and no longer a student in 2007
<b>ES</b>	<a href="#">IVIE report 2011 (in Spanish, 582 KB PDF)</a>	Young Spanish people (between 16 and 30 years old) who have entered the Spanish labour market for the first time in the five years before the survey was conducted
<b>PL</b>	<a href="#">Youth 2011 (in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF)</a>	Young people under 25 years old and employed for the first time
<b>UK</b>	<a href="#">SKOPE Research Paper 2012 (286 KB PDF)</a>	Compilation of different national studies

*Source: National contributions*

## Access to employment for young people in EU27

According to Eurostat’s Labour Force Survey (LFS) data, a total of 41.7 million young people (aged 15–29 years) were in employment in the EU27 in 2012 (18.8 and 22.9 million young people aged 15–24 years and 25–29 years, respectively). This figure represented 19.7% of the total working population.

The LFS data also show that the employment situation of young people in Europe is much more difficult than the European average across all age categories; this is particularly the case for the 15–24 age group. The employment rate of young people in the 15–24 age group was 32.9% in 2012, nearly half the general average rate (64.2%), whereas the employment rate of those in the 25–29 age group was above the average at 71.1%. In contrast, the unemployment rate among young European people was 22.8% in the 15–24 age group and 13.8% in the 25–29 age group, well above the general average of 10.6% (Figure 1). In total, 9.2 million young people aged between 15 and 29 were unemployed in 2012 in the EU27 (5.5 and 3.7 million in the 15–24 and 25–29 age groups, respectively). Unfortunately, the economic crisis which began in 2008 has aggravated the unemployment situation among young people.

Figure 1: Unemployment rates for young people, by country, 2012 (%)

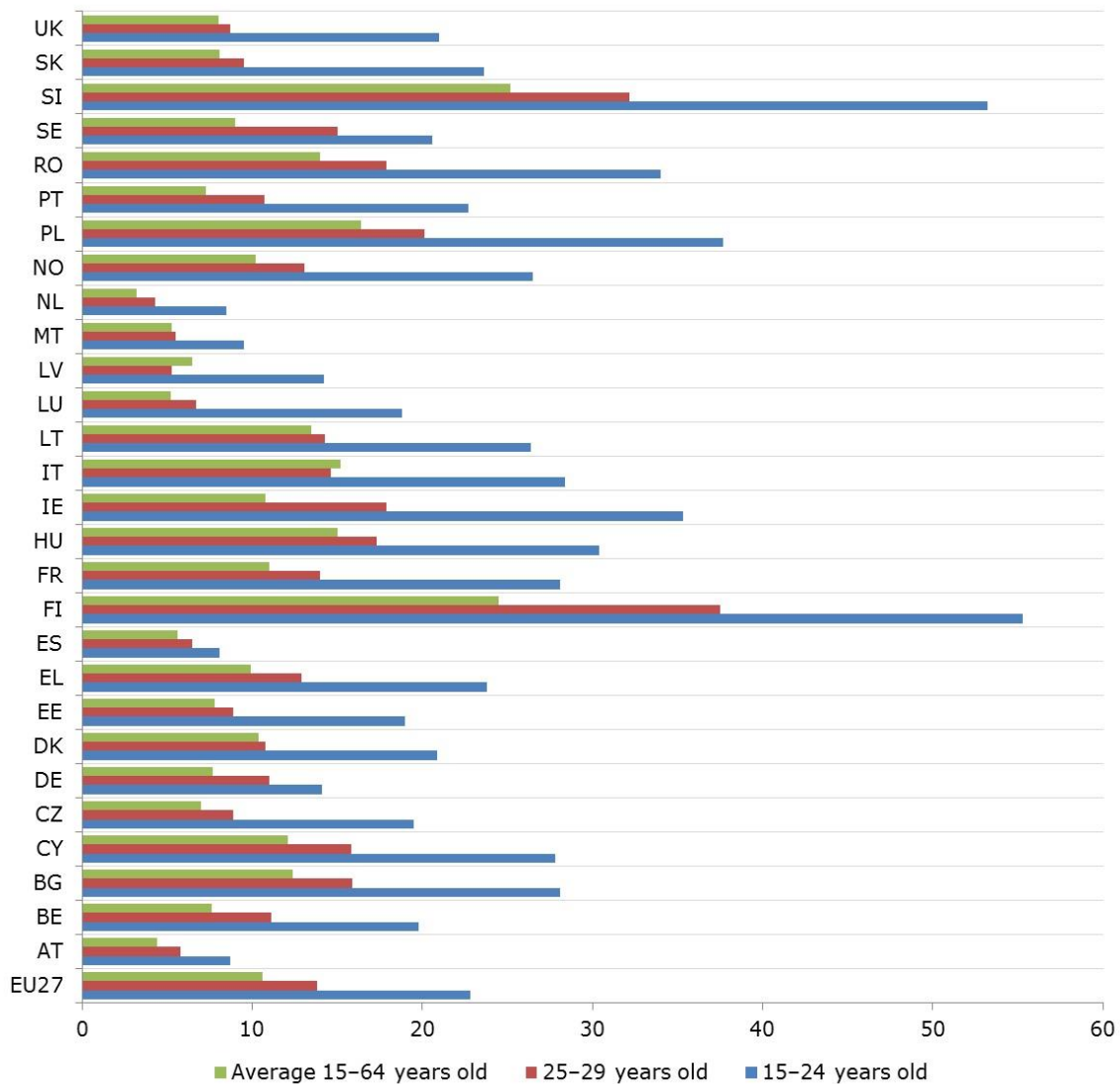


Figure 1: Unemployment rates for young people, by country, 2012 (%)

Note: See Annex 1 for a full list of country codes and names.

Source: Eurostat

### Country differences

This general picture shows important differences by country. Young people in some Nordic and central European Member States (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden) had 'better-than-average' indicators in terms of both employment and unemployment rates in 2012. In contrast, a number of southern and eastern Member States (Bulgaria, the Baltic states, Greece, Portugal, Romania and Spain) showed a distinctive more negative employment situation among young people (Table 2).

Several Member States (Greece, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Slovakia and Spain) had particularly high unemployment levels among their youngest workers (that is, those less than 25 years old) in 2012, with rates exceeding 30% (and over 50% in Greece and Spain). In Greece, Portugal and

Spain, unemployment rates in the 25–29 age group also exceeded 20%; they were over 30% in Greece and Spain. Countries such as Austria, Germany, the Netherlands and Norway had the lowest youth unemployment rates, with values below 10% in all cases (Table 2).

**Table 2: Total employment, and employment/unemployment rates for young people, by country, 2012**

	Total employment (thousands)			Employment rate (%)			Unemployment rate (%)		
	15–24	25–29	% of total employment	15–24	25–29	Average 15–64	15–24	25–29	Average 15–64
<b>EU27</b>	18,749.8	22,971.6	19.7	32.9	71.1	64.2	22.8	13.8	10.6
<b>AT</b>	541.4	454.1	24.2	54.6	82.5	72.5	8.7	5.8	4.4
<b>BE</b>	335.0	527.5	19.3	25.3	75.9	61.8	19.8	11.1	7.6
<b>BG</b>	178.3	310.3	16.9	21.9	63.7	58.8	28.1	15.9	12.4
<b>CY</b>	30.2	55.6	22.7	28.1	74.4	64.6	27.8	15.8	12.1
<b>CZ</b>	300.7	518.3	17.0	25.2	72.3	66.5	19.5	8.9	7.0
<b>DE</b>	4,177.8	3,857.6	20.5	46.6	77.6	72.8	8.1	6.5	5.6
<b>DK</b>	385.1	228.7	23.4	55.0	71.8	72.6	14.1	11.0	7.7
<b>EE</b>	55.3	76.0	21.8	33.0	73.3	67.1	20.9	10.8	10.4
<b>EL</b>	140.5	370.1	13.8	13.1	53.6	51.3	55.3	37.5	24.5
<b>ES</b>	832.7	1,733.0	15.0	18.2	58.9	55.4	53.2	32.2	25.2
<b>FI</b>	268.1	256.7	21.6	41.8	74.8	69.4	19.0	8.9	7.8
<b>FR</b>	2,135.9	2,849.7	19.5	28.8	74.9	63.9	23.8	12.9	9.9
<b>HU</b>	216.0	444.5	17.2	18.6	67.3	57.2	28.1	14.0	11.0
<b>IE</b>	156.1	229.3	21.5	28.2	67.7	58.8	30.4	17.3	15.0
<b>IT</b>	1,121.2	1,948.1	13.7	18.6	57.3	56.8	35.3	17.9	10.8
<b>LT</b>	88.7	137.6	18.1	21.6	75.7	62.2	26.4	14.3	13.5
<b>LU</b>	13.2	28.2	17.7	21.7	78.7	65.8	18.8	6.7	5.2
<b>LV</b>	73.3	110.0	21.3	28.7	74.6	63.1	28.4	14.6	15.2
<b>MT</b>	24.8	25.5	29.5	43.8	82.6	59.0	14.2	5.3	6.5
<b>NL</b>	1,280.8	839.6	25.7	63.3	83.4	75.1	9.5	5.5	5.3
<b>PL</b>	1,150.0	2,099.4	21.2	24.7	73.1	59.7	26.5	13.1	10.2
<b>PT</b>	266.3	475.5	17.1	23.6	71.0	61.8	37.7	20.1	16.4
<b>RO</b>	644.8	1,104.8	19.7	23.9	67.8	59.5	22.7	10.7	7.3
<b>SE</b>	497.6	464.0	21.3	40.2	77.2	73.8	23.6	9.5	8.1

	Total employment (thousands)			Employment rate (%)			Unemployment rate (%)		
	15–24	25–29	% of total employment	15–24	25–29	Average 15–64	15–24	25–29	Average 15–64
<b>SI</b>	61.0	101.2	17.9	27.3	72.9	64.1	20.6	15.0	9.0
<b>SK</b>	146.4	295.7	19.1	20.1	68.0	59.7	34.0	17.9	14.0
<b>UK</b>	3,628.7	3,430.5	24.8	46.9	76.9	70.1	21.0	8.7	8.0
<b>NO</b>	341.7	261.3	24.1	52.2	80.0	75.7	8.5	4.3	3.2

Source: Eurostat

## Sector differences

Young workers below 25 years old in the EU27 appear particularly prevalent in certain sectors such as ‘wholesale and retail trade’ and ‘accommodation and food service activities’ (both sectors concentrate 21.0% and 10.2% of total youth employment in the EU27, respectively), well above the European averages (13.9% and 4.5%, respectively). In contrast, young workers are particularly underrepresented in other sectors such as ‘education’ and ‘public administration’ (3.9% and 3.6% of total youth employment, respectively, compared with 7.4% and 7.0% for the EU27 average). Young men seem to be particularly present in manufacturing and construction activities, whereas young women have a higher presence in tertiary activities, especially in social work, education and financial services.

These figures are confirmed by information from various national sources. A [2011 report \(in Dutch, 4.6 MB PDF\)](#) by the Flemish Public Employment Service (VDAB) identified several sectors such as catering and tourism, personal services, retail, construction and agency work (usually used by young people as a way to find a job) where young employees (aged 15–24 years) were overrepresented. According to [annual data from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy \(in Finnish\)](#), young workers in Finland are mainly concentrated in sectors such as wholesale and retail trade as well as human health and social work activities. Similar results are also available from Romania ([RO1002019I](#)). A [2012 report \(in Spanish, 582 KB PDF\)](#) from the Valencian Economic Research Institute (IVIE) states that the most common economic sectors where young entrants start their working life in Spain are ‘hotels, restaurants and catering’ (Horeca), commerce and ‘other private tertiary’ sectors where they represent 18.4%, 14.4% and 23.5%, respectively. According to a [report \(1.0 MB PDF\)](#) by the UK Commission for Employment and Skills (UKCES) published in December 2012, young workers in the UK remain concentrated in retail and service sector occupations. These economic sectors often include occupations with lower educational requirements such as shop assistants, store employees, waiters and kitchen assistants.

## Type of employment contract

The youngest workers usually work as employees to a greater extent than other age groups (92.9% of young workers aged 15 to 24 compared with 81.1% for the European general average), whereas the presence of self-employed is much lower among the youngest workers (only 4.3% of young workers compared with 14.5% for the European average). The situation of the 25–29 age group is much more in line with the general average.

A [2011 report \(in Polish, 1.4 MB PDF\)](#) from the Central Statistical Office (GUS) shows that the largest share of Polish people aged 15–29 had their first job after completing or leaving formal

education as paid employees (87% of the cases), whereas only 9% were self-employed and 4% were unpaid family workers. However, in France, [research \(in French, 151 KB PDF\)](#) by the National Institute of Statistics and Economic Studies ([Insee](#)) found that nearly 75% of the young French self-employed had been ‘forced’ to go in this direction due to the lack of opportunities for dependent employment.

## **Working conditions of young workers and labour market entrants**

### **Employment status and security, working time and pay**

#### *Higher presence of non-standard forms of employment*

Young workers in Europe are disproportionately affected by a higher presence of ‘non-standard’ forms of employment compared with the average European worker. This is reflected in the higher presence of temporary, part-time work and other non-standard forms of employment such as temporary agency employment and working without contracts ([TN0812019S](#), [TN1101019S](#)). The 2008 economic crisis exacerbated this situation, but with important differences between young men and young women.

The literature identifies a number of reasons behind the particular presence of atypical jobs among this group. As noted by a [2009 report \(in Dutch\)](#) from Steunpunt Werk en Sociale Economie ([WSE](#)) and an [online article \(in Swedish\)](#), one reason is a preference by employers to use non-standard contracts for new entrants as they are more flexible, offering the possibility of rapid adjustment and a way of achieving lower wages, especially during crisis periods. Another reason, identified in the 2009 WSE report and an [earlier WSE report \(in Swedish\)](#), is that young people – especially those with higher educational levels – consider non-standard contracts as an undesired but feasible option of gaining their first experience of a job and of improving their future chances in the labour market. Overall, this situation is evidence of a precarious integration of young people in the labour market as well as the difficulties and higher job insecurity they experience in achieving a stable job.

Eurostat’s data for 2012 show that 42.1% of EU27 workers younger than 24 years were employed on a fixed-term or temporary basis, well above the 13.7% EU average (Figure 2). France, Germany, Italy, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain and Sweden all saw levels of temporary employment in 2012 of well over 50% (see Figure 2 and Table 3).

Figure 2: Percentage of young people in temporary employment compared with average working population, by country, 2012

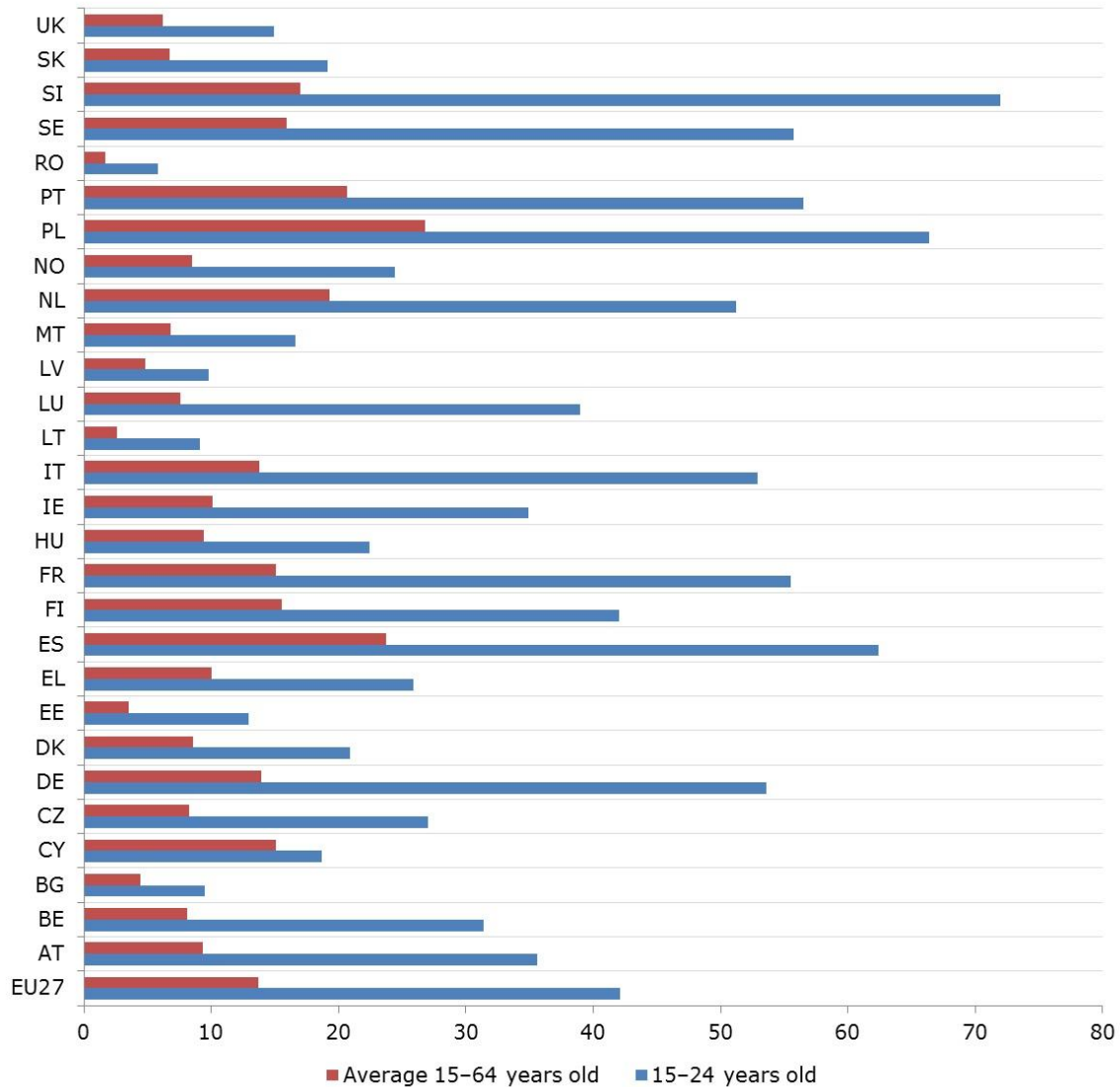


Figure 2: Percentage of young people in temporary employment compared with average working population, by country, 2012

Source: Eurostat

Table 3: Percentage of young people (15–24 years old) in part-time, involuntary part-time and temporary employment, 2012

	Part-time		Involuntary part-time		Temporary	
	15–24	Average 15–64	15–24	Average 15–64	15–24	Average 15–64
<b>EU27</b>	31.1	19.2	12.4	10.1	35.6	9.3
<b>AT</b>	18.8	24.9	12.4	10.1	35.6	9.3



	Part-time		Involuntary part-time		Temporary	
	15–24	Average 15–64	15–24	Average 15–64	15–24	Average 15–64
<b>BE</b>	25.6	24.7	22.4	10.7	31.4	8.1
<b>BG</b>	4.2	2.2	n.a.	66.5	9.5	4.4
<b>CY</b>	18.8	9.7	56.4	53.1	18.7	15.1
<b>CZ</b>	9.9	5.0	19.6	20.0	27.0	8.3
<b>DE</b>	21.7	25.7	13.1	16.9	53.6	13.9
<b>DK</b>	65.0	24.8	9.1	17.5	20.9	8.6
<b>EE</b>	18.6	9.2	n.a.	20.2	12.9	3.5
<b>EL</b>	19.4	7.6	65.4	65.0	25.9	10.0
<b>ES</b>	35.6	14.6	56.2	60.9	62.4	23.7
<b>FI</b>	39.2	14.1	20.9	25.7	42.0	15.5
<b>FR</b>	23.1	17.7	46.6	31.5	55.5	15.1
<b>HU</b>	9.7	6.6	51.8	41.1	22.4	9.4
<b>IE</b>	48.2	23.5	33.7	41.2	34.9	10.1
<b>IT</b>	27.5	16.8	74.0	58.8	52.9	13.8
<b>LT</b>	15.5	8.8	n.a.	33.5	9.1	2.6
<b>LU</b>	22.7	18.5	18.9	13.7	39.0	7.6
<b>LV</b>	15.0	8.9	28.5	43.5	9.8	4.8
<b>MT</b>	20.6	13.2	28.3	16.4	16.6	6.8
<b>NL</b>	76.7	49.2	9.2	9.1	51.2	19.3
<b>PL</b>	16.7	7.2	26.1	27.5	66.4	26.8
<b>PT</b>	20.1	11.0	45.5	47.9	56.5	20.7
<b>RO</b>	17.8	9.1	70.8	55.1	5.8	1.7
<b>SE</b>	48.5	25.0	44.6	28.8	55.7	15.9
<b>SI</b>	38.3	9.0	4.1	8.6	72.0	17.0
<b>SK</b>	7.3	4.0	47.7	32.1	19.1	6.7
<b>UK</b>	40.3	25.9	28.5	19.4	14.9	6.2
<b>NO</b>	57.9	27.2	12.9	17.1	24.4	8.5

*Note: n.a. = not available.*

*Source: Eurostat*

Evidence from several countries allows further qualification of this level of temporary employment. For instance, fixed-term employment was involuntary because no permanent job could be found for about two-thirds of young workers in Belgium according to the [2009 report \(in](#)

[Dutch](#)) from WSE, and three-quarters of young workers in Bulgaria (Dulevski, 2012). Meanwhile, a study by the [Higher Council of Employment](#) published in 2007 found that young people with a temporary job were mainly occupied in very short-term contracts (less than three months) or medium-term contracts (from 4 to 12 months). In addition, the same study showed that the share of employees with a temporary contract correlated negatively with the number of years since the end of studying, from 22% after 1–2 years to 6% after 9–10 years in the labour market. A [survey \(in German, 962 KB PDF\)](#) conducted in 2008 for the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ([BMAS](#)) found that about two-thirds of the workers aged 18–34 years in Germany had held a non-standard contract at least once in their career. In retrospect, 37% reported work experience in more than two non-standard jobs.

Data for Belgium, Bulgaria, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain also show a higher presence of other non-standard forms of employment among young people, such as temporary agency work or working without contracts. For instance, data for 2010 from Steunpunt WSE show that 20.6% of young temporary employees in Belgium (15–24 years old) were agency workers. In Bulgaria, the share of young people (aged 15–19 years) working without an employment contract (not even a verbal one) in 2011 was 19.6 % compared with 1.7% for all employees (Dulevski, 2012).

In France, some studies have shown a high presence of young people who accept employment as an ‘intern’ or even as a ‘volunteer’ so as to obtain work experience ([FR1111011I](#)). According to [online data \(in German\)](#) from the Federal Statistical Office ([Destatis](#)), up to 4.6% of employees younger than 25 years in Germany had temporary agency employment contracts in 2011, nearly double that in older age groups. Similar results were found in the Netherlands, where there was a higher presence of agency work and on-call contracts among employees under 30 years old compared with older workers (4.3% and 10.2%, respectively, compared with 1.6% and 1.3%, respectively, according to 2012 data from [TNO](#). According to Statistics Portugal ([INE](#)), up to 43.1% of all employees involved in temporary agency work in Portugal were less than 30 years old in 2012 (much higher than the approximately 17% that this age group represents in the total Portuguese employment figures); agency work is used as a vehicle to enter into the labour market and is seen by young people as the only way towards the aim of having a stable job.

Part-time work also seems particularly prevalent among young workers. Eurostat data for 2012 show that 31.1% of young EU27 workers aged under 25 worked part time compared with the average of 19.2% for the whole EU workforce. Some Member States (Denmark, Ireland, the Netherlands, Sweden and the UK) and Norway have a particularly high percentage of young part-time workers (that is, shares well above 40%) (Table 3). Available data also show a high presence of involuntary/non-desired part-time work, usually linked to the lack of full-time job opportunities.

Eurostat data show that 29.1% of part-time workers in the EU27 less than 25 years old do so on an involuntary basis; this percentage is particularly high in countries such as Greece, Italy and Romania (more than 65% in all cases) (Table 3). Studies by the Higher Council of Employment in Belgium, a [2012 report \(in French, 2.3 MB PDF\)](#) on the employment of young people by the Economic, Social and Environmental Council ([CESC](#)) in France, a [2011 report \(in German\)](#) from DIW Berlin in Germany and a Spanish study all confirm this high presence on non-voluntary part-time employment. For instance, according to a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from the National Institute for Safety and Health at Work ([INSHT](#)), 10.8% of workers aged 16–34 years in Spain have a non-voluntary part-time job, in contrast with 7.3% on average for the total workforce.

The results of national studies that have looked at new young entrants to the labour market also confirm the overall presence of these non-standard forms of employment among this specific group. Thus, a [Belgian study \(in Dutch\)](#) conducted among young entrants (15–24 years old) who were students the year before found that for 44.9% the first job was a temporary job – a figure

much higher than the global 31.6% among all colleagues with work experience in this age group and certainly more than the 8.6% in the total working population (15–64 years old). A [2011 government report \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#) stated that the largest share (60%) of new employees aged 15–29 in Poland were employed for the first time on temporary contracts compared with 40% on permanent contracts. An [IVIE report \(in Spanish, 582 KB PDF\)](#) found that 55.2% of young people entering the labour market in 2011 in Spain had a temporary contract and 6.8% had no contract at all, while 32.9% had a permanent contract and 3.4% entered the labour market as self-employed. According to a [2012 report \(282 KB PDF\)](#) from the ESRC Centre on Skills, Knowledge and Organisational Performance ([SKOPE](#)), new young workers in the UK experience high levels of casual work including agency work, temporary contracts and part-time work.

Also worth noting is the relatively high presence of subsidised jobs among young people in a number of countries such as Denmark and France; according to [online data from INSEE \(in French\)](#), 25.3% of the jobs occupied by young people aged under 26 years in France were subsidised jobs). Various research studies warn that many of these subsidised young entrants are used as cheap labour and often do not subsequently achieve regular employment. Reports of these studies include an [online article dated 1 August 2012 \(in Danish\)](#) from [Berlingske Business](#), an [online article dated 10 March 2012 \(in Danish\)](#) from [Information.dk](#) and [statistics released on 28 November 2012 \(in French\)](#) by the Directorate for Research, Studies and Statistics at the Ministry of Labour, Social Relations, Family and Solidarity ([DARES](#)).

### *Diverse perceptions on job security*

The information available from national sources shows distinctive results according to the level of job security experienced by young workers. According to the [findings of Eurofound's fifth European Working Conditions Survey 2010](#) and taking the whole EU27 as a reference, 13.9% of young Europeans aged between 18 and 24 thought in 2010 that they would be 'very likely' or 'quite likely' to lose their job in the next six months, although this ratio was very similar to that for the average population (13.2%). This result is confirmed in data from various national studies which found that young workers in general experience a lower or similar fear of losing employment than older age groups. These studies come from:

- Austria – [WCI](#) annual data;
- Denmark – [2012 report \(in Danish\)](#) from the National Research Centre for the Working Environment ([NFA](#));
- Finland – [Working Life Barometer and other reports \(in Finnish\)](#) from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy;
- Germany – [2012 report \(in German, 1.06 MB PDF\)](#) from the Federal Institute for Occupational Health and Safety ([BAuA](#));
- Netherlands – [TNO Working Conditions Survey 2012](#).

However, a contrasting picture is reported from Bulgaria, Hungary, Ireland, Italy and Spain. According to a [study by F&F and IPSOS in 2011 \(in Hungarian\)](#), half of workers aged 15–25 in Hungary feared losing their jobs in the coming months; this anxiety resulted in lower levels of loyalty and commitment towards the enterprise. In Ireland, the [Working Conditions Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 1 2008 \(1.5 MB PDF\)](#) from the Central Statistics Office ([CSO](#)) found that the proportion of younger employees who did not expect to be in their current job in six months' time was much higher than for older employees (17% of employees aged 15–19 and 15% for those aged 20–24 compared with 8% or less for all other age groups); however, the proportion of young Irish employees who did not expect to be in their current job due to a voluntary resignation was higher than for older employees (12% of employees aged 15–19 and 10% of those aged 20–24 compared with 4% or less of employees in all age groups).

According to data from the Third Quality of Work Survey carried out by the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training ([Isfol](#)), 23.2% of young Italian workers (15–29 years old) reported in 2010 a risk of losing their job, above the 18.2% among the general average. Also in Italy, [research \(in Italian\)](#) carried out in collaboration with the Institute for Economic and Social Research (IRES) showed that 25.5% saw their future job expectations as full of risks and uncertainties; this percentage was higher among those with fixed-term contracts than those with permanent contracts. In Spain, a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT found that 56.4% of workers aged 16–34 suggested in 2010 that they were at high risk of losing their employment compared with 51.4% for all workers on average. [Data from the 2010 Quality of Life at Work survey \(in Spanish\)](#) carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration show that the proportion of workers who considered it ‘quite probable’ or ‘very probable’ they would keep their job in the next semester of 2010 was lower among young people (72.6% for those aged 16–24 and 81.2% for those aged 24–29) than for all workers on average (86.2%); the percentage looking for another job was much higher among young people (22.7% for those aged 16–24 and 20.6% for those aged 25–29) compared with the average (11.4%).

This poor ‘self-perception’ of job security explains why more than half of the young Bulgarian workers (56.7%) who took part in a [work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#) in 2010 considered there were no possibilities for career development in their company compared with some 28% who suggested that such opportunities were ‘high’ or ‘very high’.

The prevalence of irregular forms of employment (such as temporary or part-time work), together with the distinctive effects of the economic crisis in some countries, helps to explain these results.

### *Less autonomy at work*

As noted in the [overview report for Eurofound’s fifth European Working Conditions Survey](#) (EWCS), young workers in general and young entrants in particular have more limited levels of autonomy in some work-related domains (for example, job tasks, work methods, pace at work and working time) than older age groups.

This is confirmed by available evidence from national sources. According to a [2012 report \(in Danish\)](#) from the NFA, young workers in Denmark have significantly less influence on how and when to perform their job tasks compared with the general labour force. [Data from Statistics Estonia](#) show that the share of those who report not having any autonomy to determine their work assignments, set their work methods, determine their work pace or when their working time starts and ends was highest among 15–24 year olds in 2009. In Germany, the [2011–2012 employment survey \(in German\)](#) carried out jointly by the Federal Institute for Vocational Education and Training (BIBB) and the Federal Institute for Occupational Health and Safety (BAuA) reported that older employees were more often able to decide how, in what order and at which speed to perform their jobs compared with workers under 30 years old; a similar result was found in the Netherlands in the TNO working conditions study 2012. In Finland, the [autumn 2012 edition of the Working Life Barometer \(in Finnish, 433 KB PDF\)](#) and [Working Life Barometer October 2011 \(in Finnish, 795 KB PDF\)](#) report that the youngest workers (as well as the oldest ones) felt less frequently than other age groups that their manager encouraged them to contribute to the development of workplace-related initiatives. According to [research \(in Italian\)](#) in collaboration with IRES, young workers in Italy reported lower autonomy levels in determining work processes than other older age groups.

A likely explanation for this lack of perceived self-autonomy at work is that young workers report being considerably more exposed to monotonous and standardised work than older workers. According to 2012 data from the Swedish Federation of Trade Unions ([LO](#)), almost 40% of workers in Sweden aged 16–24 performed tasks of a monotonous and repetitive character compared with 10% of the workforce aged 55–64. Similar results are confirmed by reports from

Belgium ([Flemish workability monitor 2010 \(in Dutch\)](#)), Bulgaria ([work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#)) and Germany ([2011–2012 employment survey \(in German\)](#)).

### *Longer working time and irregular hours*

Information from Bulgaria, Germany, Estonia and Spain shows that those young people who are working full time work longer hours than other age groups on average.

In Bulgaria, young full-time employees on fixed-term contracts worked an average of 4.5 hours per week in 2010 more than a typical full-time employee on a permanent contract (Dulevski, 2012). Similar results were obtained in the [2011–2012 employment survey \(in German\)](#) by BIBB/BAuA. [Data from Statistics Estonia](#) show that the proportion of overtime work is highest among younger workers aged 15–24; in 2011, up to 11.5% of 15–24 year-old workers worked overtime compared with 10.5% of 25–49 year-olds and 8.7% of 50–64 year-olds. In Spain, up to 40% of young workers (16–34 years old) extend their normal working day, but nearly half of them (45%) do not receive compensation for these extra hours (the average figure for no payment for working overtime is 40% for all age groups), according to a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT.

Young workers more often work irregular hours (shift work, night work or work during the weekend) than workers in other age groups in:

- Germany – [2011–2012 employment survey \(in German\)](#) carried out jointly by BIBB/BAuA;
- Italy – [research \(in Italian\)](#) in collaboration with IRES;
- Netherlands – [TNO Working Conditions Survey 2012](#);
- Slovenia – *Youth 2010* (Lavrič et al, 2010);
- Sweden – [2012 report \(in Swedish, 713 KB PDF\)](#) by Statistics Sweden ([SCB](#)).

For instance, in Slovenia more young people (41%) worked shifts in 2009 compared with the 32% national average of all employees aged 15–64 years. In Sweden, 55% of all young adults in employment (aged 16–24) have no regular daytime patterns – a much higher figure than the 35% in the 25–64 age group. Some Swedish and British authors (SCB 2012 report and the [SKOPE Research Paper 2012 \(286 KB PDF\)](#)) have argued that there is a major imbalance among young workers in terms of the hours they work compared with the hours they wished to work. It is therefore not surprising that the share of young Swedish employees satisfied with their working time arrangements is lower than in other age groups.

### *Usually worse pay levels*

Salary conditions play a very important role among young entrants to the labour market. For instance, Romanian research shows that the first factor affecting work satisfaction among young people is their salary conditions; this factor is way ahead of other elements such as career prospects, support from colleagues and personal fulfilment (CNSLR Frăția, 2011). Despite this key role, salary conditions among young workers are usually worse than other age groups, not only in reference to their salaries but also other paid benefits. There is abundant empirical evidence on this at national level.

For example, the percentage of young employees in the Czech Republic who receive the minimum legal wage amounts to 4.6%, nearly double the national average for all age groups (2.8%) (Duspivová, 2012). In Finland, nearly half of young workers (42%) earned less than €2,000 per month in 2012 compared with only 24% of older workers, according to [data \(in Finnish\)](#) from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health ([FIOH](#)). A [DARES report published in October 2012 \(in French, 1.1 MB PDF\)](#) found that 28% of employees in France who have ‘low salaries’ are young workers, a much higher share than their proportion in the French total working population. Similarly, 2012 data from Destatis show that young German workers aged under 25

had the highest quota of low wage earners (half of them belong to this group) compared with other age groups; this presence of low wage earners was also larger among young workers with non-standard employment relations (for example, part-time work, temporary agency work, non-permanent employment). In Italy, a [2012 report from Istituto Toniolo \(in Italian\)](#) claimed 50.2% of young workers were unsatisfied with their earnings. In Portugal, unpublished data from [Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos](#) show that 22.9% of workers aged 15–29 years earned just the national minimum wage in 2011, well above the 15.3% for the national total. Finally, data from Romania show that workers aged 15–24 years earned an average of 70% of the national mean (INS, 2012).

Referring specifically to the group of young entrants to the labour market, in Austria, the percentage of those stating that their income was insufficient to live well (15%) was higher than among workers above 30 years old (10%) and among young workers long in the job (8%) (WCI data). In Poland, 30% of people employed for the first time earned the minimum wage or less in their first month of employment, whereas this percentage was no more than 20% among all employed persons, according to the report [Youth 2011 \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#).

Evidence from Cyprus and Ireland suggests that these differences refer not only to salaries but also to additional paid benefits. Thus, in Cyprus, the greatest percentage of employees who stated they did not receive the bonus 13th salary in the hotel industry included in the sector's collective labour agreement was in the 18–25 age group (Cyprus Labour Institute, 2012). Meanwhile, Irish workers under 25 years old were found to be more likely than those in the 25–64 age group to receive no rewards in addition to basic pay; receipt of regular pay increments increases steadily with age and years of experience (data from the ESRI national workplace surveys 2009 ([ESRI](#))). In addition, the proportion of employees who received at least one additional benefit (such as paid sick leave or paid leave to attend job-related training activities) was lowest among younger employees in 2008; only 9% of employees aged 15–19 years received at least one additional benefit compared with 64% of employees aged 45–59 years, according to the CSO report [Working Conditions Quarterly National Household Survey Quarter 1 2008 \(1.5 MB PDF\)](#).

The literature suggests a number of reasons underpinning these results including:

- years of experience and seniority levels – [2012 report from GUS \(in Polish, 4.3 MB PDF\)](#);
- the cautiousness of labour market entrants to negotiate the salary in their first job due to the fear of not getting the job (often they tend to accept the first salary proposal from the employer) – see [online article dated 22 September 2010 \(in Danish\)](#) from GDjoef Magazine, 2010 and [online article dated 14 August 2011 \(in Danish\)](#) from Berlingske Business;
- the unwillingness of employers to ‘overpay’ employees in their first job – [Youth 2011 \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#).

### *Significant levels of satisfaction at work, but not in all countries*

Figures on job satisfaction by age do not show an identical behaviour pattern in all analysed countries. While the data from some surveys point to increasing job satisfaction with age, others indicate the opposite. There are also some cases in which there is no clear connection between job satisfaction and age ([TN0608TR01](#)).

Young workers, and young entrants in particular, report high levels of job satisfaction at work in Austria, Belgium, Finland, Germany and Norway. For instance, the overall job satisfaction of young entrants in Austria on a five-point scale (1 = very satisfied; 5 = not at all satisfied) was nearly the same as that of workers above 30 (1.90 and 1.91, respectively), whereas young workers who had been longer in the job show a slightly lower overall job satisfaction (1.97) (WCI data for 2012). According to a [2010 report from Steunpunt WSE \(in Dutch\)](#), up to 94% of young workers (18–26 years old) in Belgium reported being satisfied with their job. Similarly high levels of job satisfaction can also be found in Finland and Norway (data from FIOH and Statistics Norway,

respectively). In Germany, the report [DGB-Index Gute Arbeit, 2010 \(in German, 1.4 MB PDF\)](#) reported that satisfaction at work was slightly higher among young workers than among older age groups. In Slovenia, the majority of young workers were found to be satisfied with their work (80%), though there was a slight difference in the favour of regularly employed compared with part-time employed (Lavrič et al, 2010).

Notwithstanding these positive results, available evidence from some other Members States shows that young workers often have more negative job satisfaction levels, especially in comparison with older workers. In Denmark, a [2011 study](#) conducted by trade union HK Danmark among its members showed that whereas 58% of the respondents aged 15–34 years were ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’ with their job, the share rose to 67% among 35–54 year-olds and to 68% among those aged 55 years or older. In Ireland, an [ESRI press release dated 28 September 2010 on the results from two National Workplace Surveys](#) noted that job satisfaction levels rose with age and job tenure. In Sweden the report entitled [The Work Environment 2011 \(in Swedish, 10.6 MB PDF\)](#) from the Swedish Work Environment Authority (AV) found that the proportion of young adults in employment under 30 years old who considered their work to be pointless was higher than in other age groups.

## Skills development

### *Diversity of situations and perspectives*

Young workers have less access to training opportunities offered by their employers than other age groups in Estonia, Finland, Germany, Ireland and Lithuania, according to the [Estonian Work Life Survey 2009 methodological report \(685 KB PDF\)](#), [annual data from the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy](#), a Destatis report [Further education 2012 \(in German, 369 KB PDF\)](#), the [overview report for the fifth EWCS](#) and the EWCO report on training and employability [TN0506TR01](#). For instance, an [ESRI press release dated 28 September 2010 on the results from two National Workplace Surveys](#) reported that 44.9% of employees aged under 25 years had participated in employer-sponsored training in the past two years compared with 51.6% in the 25–39 age group, 49.3% in the 40–54 age group and 43.9% in the 55 years plus age group. According to the [SKOPE Research Paper 2012 \(286 KB PDF\)](#), entry-level employment for young workers in the UK has limited training attached to it.

This lower rate of participation in employer-paid training among young people is explained by a number of reasons. The [Work Life Survey 2008 \(in Finland\)](#) conducted by Statistics Finland ([Tilastokeskus](#)) and the [Working Life Barometer October 2011 \(in Finnish, 795 KB PDF\)](#) cite the greater presence of fixed-term contracts and temporary contracts among young workers, the occupations and sectors in which young people usually work and the general position of young people in the workplace. In the UK, [research findings presented at a seminar in September 2011 \(698 KB PDF\)](#) suggest that the jobs occupied by the youngest group of people leaving school at age 16 and 18 (usually characterised by low pay, low skill content, low quality and a temporary nature) offer little access to training. Also in the UK, a [2012 UKCES report](#) found that organisations which recruit young workers are less likely to provide training than organisations that do not recruit young workers.

In other cases, however, young workers do not report a low level of satisfaction with the training they receive. Austrian young entrants and young workers with longer experience in the job show the highest level of satisfaction with vocational training opportunities offered by their company than other age groups (WCI annual data). In Belgium, only 19.6% of young workers claimed to have experienced problems with learning opportunities compared with 24.8% for the average worker, according to the [Flemish workability monitor 2010 \(in Dutch\)](#). In Sweden, the AV report entitled [The Work Environment 2011 \(in Swedish, 10.6 MB PDF\)](#) found that the proportion of

employees who stated they had opportunities to learn new things was larger in the age group under 30 years old than among employees in older age groups (30–64 years old).

German data presented in the report [Further education 2012 \(in German, 369 KB PDF\)](#) show that the percentage of young workers under 24 years old involved in self-paid training was higher compared with other age groups (about 20% compared with 13%, respectively), particularly among younger women. Similar results were found by the Netherlands Working Conditions Survey 2012, which showed that young employees are often likely to pay all the cost of training courses themselves and usually undertake the training in their spare time.

## Health and well-being

### *Higher propensity to accidents*

Young workers in general and young entrants in particular seem to be at higher risk of being involved in an accident at work than older workers. This is confirmed by data from:

- Denmark – [2012 report \(in Danish\)](#) from the NFA;
- Estonia – [annual data from the Labour Inspectorate of Estonia](#);
- Finland – [annual data from the Ministry of Employment and the Economy \(in Finnish\)](#);
- Germany – BAuA report, [Safety and health at work 2011 \(in German, 73 KB PDF\)](#);
- Poland – GUS report, [Accidents at work in 2012 \(in Polish, 344 KB PDF\)](#);
- Sweden – AV report, [Young in work \(in Swedish, 271 KB PDF\)](#) and Nielsen (2012).

The NFA survey in Denmark found that 5.7% of all respondents were involved in at least one occupational accident in 2012; this percentage was higher for men aged 18–24 years (10.9%) compared with 8.3% for men aged 25–34 years and 8.4% for women aged 18–24 years.

According to a report on [Sickness absence in 2011 \(in Polish, 5.1 MB PDF\)](#), from the Department of Statistics at the Polish Department of Social Security, and a 2012 report [Job satisfaction – An age issue? \(in Swedish, 848 KB PDF\)](#), from the Swedish occupational health services, this higher exposure to work-related risks often results in higher levels of absence in young workers due to work-related illness than in other age groups.

A number of reasons have been put forward to explain this higher exposure to risks and accidents. A [2009 report \(in Danish, 52 KB PDF\)](#) from the Danish Working Environment Authority ([Arbejdstilsynet](#)) and the 2012 AV report in Sweden, *Young in work*, suggest that the most common causes of occupational accidents for new labour entrants relate to:

- lack of work-based experience;
- lack of training and instruction or supervision on work environment issues;
- possible unnecessary high risk-taking behaviour.

[Research \(in Hungarian\)](#) as part of the Graduate Course Tracking System (*Diplomás Pályakövető Rendszer*) and [research findings \(in Portuguese\)](#) published on a Portuguese educational news website suggest that young workers are usually unaware of their employer's duties and their own rights and responsibilities in the health and safety domain. Results from the [2008 Work Life Survey 2008 \(in Finnish\)](#) suggest that the relatively higher frequency of injury hazards among young workers in Finland is also explained by the sectors and occupations where they typically work. Meanwhile, a [2011 study on forms of employment \(in Swedish\)](#) by the Swedish Trade Union Confederation LO suggested that young employees are comparatively more exposed to work-related health problems due to their insecure employment status.

In some countries, however, young workers seem to be less conscious of these risky situations. Austrian young entrants and young workers in general self-report a low exposure to health risks (such as noise or dust) and risks of accidents (WCI data). In Bulgaria, only 4.2% of young



workers under 30 years old questioned as part of a [work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#) considered that they always had dangerous working conditions, while the majority felt they never worked in such conditions. In Spain, most young workers (88.6%) perceived their overall health condition to be ‘good’ or ‘very good’ in a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT – a figure well above that claimed by other age groups. In Sweden, a [comparative study \(in Swedish, 400 KB PDF\)](#) by AV concluded that reported work-related disorders were relatively lower in young employees (16–25 years old) compared with employees aged over 25 years. A report, [Illness or injury in 2011 \(in Czech\)](#), by the Czech Statistical Office (ČSÚ) also shows that, although occupational injuries happen more frequently to the youngest workers, the period of incapacity for work is shorter in the case of very young workers than it is on average.

### *Less stress and good social relationships at work*

In the majority of countries, the available data show that young workers report lower work-related stress levels than other age groups. Up to 36.7% of Belgian workers under 30 years old interviewed for the [Flemish workability monitor 2010 \(in Dutch\)](#) reported work stress and pressures as a problem compared with 43.2% on average. In Bulgaria, 27.7% of workers under 30 years old who took part in the [work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#) worked to tight deadlines compared with 32.2% of older workers. Data from [Finland’s Work and Health Survey \(in Finnish\)](#) for 2012 show that 20% of young workers consider work as ‘quite’ or ‘very’ psychologically stressful compared with 31% among older workers, where young workers did not have to rush as often (35% stating ‘quite’ or ‘very’ often) to get work done as older workers (45%). In the Netherlands, the [TNO Working Conditions Survey 2012](#) reported that 18.5% of young workers ‘never’ found their job hectic (versus 10.2% on average), 37.7% reported that their job ‘never’ or ‘sometimes’ required a lot of attention (versus 20.8% on average) and 19.5% of young workers suggested that their job ‘never’ required intensive thinking (versus 6.1% on average). Evidence from other countries such as France complements and ‘fine tunes’ this positive perspective; the [findings of the ESTIME project \(in French\)](#) suggest that somatic stress breaks out and reaches a higher level after several years of professional life, which may explain why young workers report lower levels of stress.

Young workers show a high satisfaction with the social aspects of their work, particularly with contacts and support from colleagues. According to the [findings of the fifth EWCS](#), up to 75.4% of young European workers said they received help from their colleagues. The Flemish workability monitor 2010 found that the largest share of young workers (84.4%) reported high satisfaction with the support they got from colleagues, much higher than among other age groups. In Norway, workers between 16 and 24 years old reported positive social relationships at work to a higher degree than all other age groups (2009 data from Statistics Norway). A [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT found that young Spanish workers perceived that they ‘always’ or ‘frequently’ got support in 77.5% of cases, in contrast with 71.8% on average. Similar results can be found in Bulgaria and Finland (data from the work climate survey and FIOH, respectively).

Despite these positive results, a [2007 report \(in Finnish, 87 KB PDF\)](#) from the Finnish Ministry of Labour and [data from Ipsos \(in Hungarian\)](#) in Hungary also suggest that young workers experience more mental (verbal intimidation) and physical violence-related situations (especially kicking and striking) than older age groups. In Finland, youngest workers (18–24 years old) employed in the local government and public sector are particularly exposed to physical and mental violence than older employee groups, according to the [Working Life Barometer October 2011 \(in Finnish, 795 KB PDF\)](#). These results are explained, among other reasons, by the lack of experience or skills to anticipate the threat of violence in certain situations.

## Work–life balance

### *Reconciliation mostly satisfactory among young workers*

According to the information available, the issue of reconciliation of working and non-working life does not seem to be at the top of the main worries among young workers. Young Austrian labour market entrants reported the highest level of satisfaction with respect to the reconciliation of work with other private interests and responsibilities, followed by young workers who had been longer in their job (WCI data). In Germany, 6 out of 10 young workers aged up to 24 years in the [2011–2012 employment survey \(in German\)](#) carried out jointly by BIBB/BAuA reported not having problems in reconciling work and private life. In Spain, young workers under 30 years old reported the highest levels of satisfaction with their work–life balance in the [2010 Quality of Life at Work survey \(in Spanish\)](#) carried out by the Spanish Ministry of Labour and Immigration.

A high proportion of young workers (71.9%) in Bulgaria interviewed for the [work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#) and 84% of young workers in Finland participating in the [Work and Health Survey \(in Finnish\)](#) for 2012 claimed that their private life ‘never’ or ‘rarely’ had an impact on work. Similar results are available from Denmark ([NFA 2012 report \(in Danish\)](#)).

The lack of important family elements (that is, children or dependent parents) in the life of most young people, and especially the youngest workers, explains these results. For instance, 62.1% of Dutch workers under 30 years old said they never neglected family activities due to work, whereas this percentage was 49.3% among those workers aged 30 years or more, according to the [TNO Working Conditions Survey 2012](#).

Young working couples with children still ‘solve’ problems in reconciling working and family life using a ‘traditional’ gender-biased strategy. In Belgium, the proportion of young women working part time increases when they first have children, according to the [2011 report from the Higher Employment Council \(in French\)](#), whereas in Germany, young working women with children often interrupt their careers. For instance, a [Destatis study in 2011 \(in German, 690 KB PDF\)](#) found employment rates of young mothers aged 28 were 40%, whereas those of women of the same age without children were 80%, similar to the employment rates of men in their late twenties with and without children.

## Differences in working conditions among young workers and young entrants

The previous section highlights the main distinctive characteristics of the working conditions among young workers in general and young entrants in particular compared with other working age groups. This section identifies and characterises differences in working conditions among young workers themselves according to their personal characteristics (such as age, gender, level of educational attainment, ethnic origin and family background) or occupational characteristics (such as economic sectors, occupations or type of enterprises where they work).

### Personal characteristics

#### *Differences in working conditions by age ranges*

In general, ‘older’ young workers enjoy better employment and working conditions than their ‘younger’ counterparts. As most of the European population under 20 years old is typically still studying, the very young people entering the labour market tend to have low levels of educational attainment, with negative consequences on their employment and working conditions (see also below).

Younger workers are more exposed to non-standard forms of employment such as temporary contracts, part-time contracts, temporary agency employment and jobs without contracts, as well as higher levels of unemployment, according to an unpublished CITUB report (Dulevski, 2012) and [data for 1998 to 2012 \(in Hungarian\)](#) from the Hungarian Central Statistical Office (KSH). In Spain, for example, up to 83% of salaried workers aged between 16 and 19 years had a temporary contract in 2012 compared with 60.3% of those aged 20–24 and 40.7% of those aged 25–29, according to data from the National Institute of Statistics (INE). Also in Spain, a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT notes that the perceived risk of losing employment is higher the younger the workers are).

[Evidence \(in Finnish\)](#) from FIOH also shows that the youngest workers have more irregular working times than their ‘older’ young counterparts. They also have less influence and autonomy at work to decide on job-related tasks, as reported in the [TNO Working Conditions Survey 2012](#), or to participate in job-related decisions (WCI data). They also receive lower wages for their job according to the report [Youth 2011 \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#) and a [study on the wage gap \(in Portuguese\)](#) from the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology at the University of Lisbon (CIES-IUL). For instance in the German case, 51.3% of workers aged 15–25 are low wage earners compared with 22.7% of those aged 25–35 (2012 data from Destatis).

A [report \(in Danish\)](#) from the NFA also shows that the youngest employees experience the highest rate of occupational accidents, whereas mental stress is more common among ‘older’ young workers (the opposite is true in the case of physical stress), according to [data \(in Finnish\)](#) from FIOH and a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT.

Finally, available evidence in a number of countries shows that the struggle to balance working and non-working life seems to grow as workers age, so youngest workers manifest less feelings of neglecting things at home due to job duties (data from FIOH and TNO 2012).

### *Differences in working conditions among young men and women*

Important differences are apparent between young men and women in terms of the presence of ‘non-standard’ forms of employment in a number of Member States.

According to a number of sources, young male workers in general are more often in full-time, permanent employment as well as having regular working hours than young women. These sources include a [report \(in Danish\)](#) from the NFA, [data \(in Finnish\)](#) from FIOH, [graduate survey data 2012 \(in German, 10 MB PDF\)](#) from the German Higher Education Information System (HIS), a [2012 report \(in Norwegian, 1.1 MB PDF\)](#) from the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority (*Arbeidstilsynet*) and data from the [2011 study on forms of employment \(in Swedish\)](#) published by LO in 2012. The percentage of part-time male young workers (aged 15–24) in the EU27 was 23.6% in 2012 compared with 40.0% among women (Eurostat data). The NFA report shows that young working men experience a lower fear of becoming unemployed than their female counterparts. However, some of these results may be explained by the fact that there are some particularly female-dominated sectors (care, retail) with low job quality indicators.

Data for young Belgian entrants in a [2010 report from Steunpunt WSE \(in Dutch\)](#) and similar data for Estonian entrants (Roots, 2011) show that these gender-related differences increase with age. In this regard, German data for vocational educational and training (VET) graduates in a [2010 BIBB report \(in German, 5.1 MB PDF\)](#) show that transition periods into employment differ by gender, in the sense that the share of men and women working in ‘median precarious’ jobs (temporary standard employment) and in ‘highly precarious’ jobs (temporary part-time or marginal part-time) decreases with age, but it does so much less for women. According to a [2010 report from the Ministry of Social Affairs \(in Estonian, 3.6 MB PDF\)](#), young women in Estonia are asked about their marital status during the recruitment process much more often than men.

Young female workers consistently report lower levels of control than their male counterparts in issues such as how and when to solve job tasks (NFA report) or the length of the working day (data from FIOH).

Gender has also an impact on payment levels. A [Bundestag paper \(in German, 3.7 MB PDF\)](#) published in January 2013 found that the at-risk-of-poverty rate of workers aged 18–24 years was higher for female workers (10.2%) than for male workers (9.3%). A [study in the UK \(3.3 MB PDF\)](#) on behalf of the Higher Education Careers Services Unit ([HECSU](#)) among university graduates applying for their first post-graduation job shows that gender has a statistically significant impact on pay irrespective of sector, university, qualifications on entry to university, category of degree, or occupation. Male graduates earn more than female graduates in all sectors and particularly in legal professions. In Slovenia, young male workers (15–29 years old) receive higher payment than young women, especially when they are employed temporarily or self-employed (Lavrič et al, 2010). Meanwhile, a 2010 Ministry of Social Affairs report from Estonia and 2010 data from Destatis for Germany show that the gender pay gap widens with age; for instance, the gender pay gap for workers up to 24 years old was 2% and 9% for workers aged 26–29 years in 2010 in Germany.

Data from the NFA report and [data for 2010 \(in Portuguese, 215 KB PDF\)](#) from the Office for Strategy and Planning at the Portuguese Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity reveal that the share of occupational accidents was greater among young men than young women. Data from FIOH show young male workers in Finland were more exposed to chemicals, solvents, vibration and awkward work postures than young female workers, although women suggested they have to rush more often (40%) to get work done than men (30%).

Data from the NFA in Denmark, FIOH in Finland and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees ([TCO](#)) show that conciliation issues are not a big problem among young people irrespective of gender considerations, with perhaps the exception of ‘older’ young women (usually those over 25 years old) who report more difficulties balancing their working and non-working life. In this regard, the graduate survey data for 2012 from the HIS in Germany suggest that female university graduates interrupt their careers five years after graduation because of care responsibilities more often than men.

### *Differences in working conditions by educational levels*

Like what happens in other age groups, one of the key elements influencing the access to employment and the associated working conditions of young people is their level of educational attainment.

A large number of studies show that education level is one of the main factors determining the effective transition of young people to the labour market. For instance, in Belgium, a [2009 report \(in Dutch\)](#) from Steunpunt WSE found that employment rates among young individuals with a low level of educational attainment are much less than those of medium and highly educated young individuals (56.8% and 72.8%, respectively). In the Czech Republic, highly qualified young entrants find their first jobs relatively fast compared with workers with lower educational attainment; according to a [2011 report on education and young people \(in Czech, 140 KB PDF\)](#), in the period 2005–2009 they needed on average of 3.1 months to find their first job, while their counterparts with elementary education needed 10.6 months (4.6 months for young entrants with secondary education levels). In France, [data from Dares \(in French\)](#) show that a young person with low or no education is seven times more likely to be unemployed than one with a higher level of education who finished their studies one to four years previously. In Germany, the [BIBB Datenreport 2012 \(in German\)](#) notes that unskilled young workers were only able to access 8 sectors compared with 23 sectors by skilled workers. In several countries, low-skilled younger workers are characterised by persistent high unemployment rates; evidence on this is available from countries such as Bulgaria, Luxembourg, Spain and the UK:

- Bulgaria – 2012 report for Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, [Youth unemployment in Bulgaria \(183 KB PDF\)](#);
- Luxembourg – 2010 OECD Economics Department working paper, [Making the Luxembourg labour market work better \(512 KB PDF\)](#);
- Spain – [INE data \(in Spanish\)](#);
- UK – [seminar presentation on precarious work \(698 KB PDF\)](#).

Interestingly, evidence from the UK given in a [study for HECSU \(3.3 MB PDF\)](#) shows that graduates' labour market prospects are not only affected by the category of degree they achieved but also by the university they attended.

Available research also shows that low-skilled young people are very sensitive to the 'revolving door effect', that is to say, they do find jobs but have a higher risk of losing their job and becoming unemployed again. This creates uncertainty and obstructs the chance of developing a stable career. For instance, a [2011 VDAB report \(in Dutch, 237 KB PDF\)](#) found that almost half of the low-educated young entrants in Belgium who were able to find a job were unemployed again by the end of their first year in the labour market. In Germany, the estimated job tenure of unskilled young workers was 20 months compared with 40 months for skilled young workers according to the 2011 edition of *Jüngere Menschen ohne Berufsabschluss* from the [Federal Employment Agency](#). However, this does not mean that young highly educated workers do not change jobs. In this sense, a [2012 report \(in Polish, 6.3 MB PDF\)](#) from the Study of Human Capital in Poland ([BKL](#)) project suggests that young Polish workers with college or university degrees generally look for new job opportunities (while in work) more often than those with lower levels of educational attainment, especially during the first two years of work.

Despite easier and better access to employment, young highly qualified labour market entrants are usually confronted with the so-called problem of 'over-qualification', that is to say, their educational levels are too high for the job they are doing. Several reports from Member States confirm this problem. For instance, available estimates in Belgium from a [2011 report from Steunpunt WSE \(in Dutch\)](#) and in Spain from an [IVIE report \(in Spanish, 582 KB PDF\)](#) suggest that more than a quarter of young entrants are over-educated; this percentage is higher among people with higher levels of educational attainment. In Italy ([2012 report from Istituto Toniolo \(in Italian\)](#)) and Romania (CNSLR Frăția, 2011), half of young workers (47.4% and 51.1%, respectively) report a poor fit of their current job with their qualification levels. This problem of over-qualification has also been detected in France ([data \(in French\)](#)) from the Centre for Studies and Research into Qualifications, [Cereq](#) and in the UK ([study for HECSU \(3.3 MB PDF\)](#)) among university graduates, where in both studies more than 40% of graduates suggested they were in jobs not appropriate to their levels of qualification. This situation has the effect of reducing the chances of unemployed young people with low levels of educational attainment finding a job. In the German case, the graduate survey data for 2012 from the HIS show that this problem of over-qualification is especially important for women; 9% of male university graduates worked in jobs below their qualification level compared with 14% of female university graduates.

Several reasons may explain this mismatch. According to the 2011 Steunpunt WSE report, it may reflect the recruitment behaviour of the employer in asking for a higher degree of educational attainment than is needed for the job. In the context of the current economic crisis with limited job vacancies, however, young highly educated unemployed are being forced to apply for jobs beneath their degree level. For instance, data from IVIE shows that up to 45.7% of young people entering the labour market in Spain would be ready to accept a job for which the required qualification level was below their real qualification level. [Data from Cereq \(in French\)](#) and [research by INSEE \(in French\)](#) suggest that the problem of over-qualification among university graduates in France is more acute among individuals with a degree in human sciences than among those with industrial or scientific degrees.

The available data also confirm a direct relationship between skill or education levels and quality of working conditions in all the possible different domains such as employment status and security, pay, health and skills development. The level of educational attainment of course influences the kind of jobs and sectors that an individual can access.

For instance, in Poland, the [BKL project \(in Polish, 6.3 MB PDF\)](#) found that the higher the level of educational attainment, the more likely it is for a young person to be employed on an employment contract regulated by labour law, where the presence of young workers with primary or lower secondary school education with no contract was double in comparison to university graduates (14% compared with 7%). Meanwhile, evidence from Austria (WCI data), Finland (data from FIOH), Poland (BKL project) and the Netherlands (TNO data) shows that highly educated young workers usually work full time and less often experience irregular working hours, including working evenings, nights or weekends. In Italy, [research \(in Italian\)](#) in collaboration with IRES showed that professional rewards among young workers increased with qualification levels, so that only 11.9% of low-qualified young workers reported high wage levels compared with 26.9% of young workers with tertiary education.

Autonomy levels at work appear to increase as the level of education increases, as well as pay levels and involvement/opportunities for further training at work. For instance, Dutch data show that 64.8% of the highly educated had taken a course in the previous two years compared with 49.5% of the medium educated and 42.0% of the low educated; the lower educated who took a course more often paid for it themselves than did highly educated workers. According to data from FIOH, lower educated young workers in Finland are also more often exposed to chemical and physical risks and hazards at work than the higher educated, as well as to physical stress – though the opposite is true for mental stress.

### *Differences by other personal characteristics*

In addition to age, sex and level of educational attainment, and as it happens with the rest of the working population, a number of other key variables may affect the working conditions of young workers in Europe. These include ethnic origin, family background or the geographical areas where young workers are located.

### **Ethnic origin**

Research from Estonia, Germany and Sweden highlights important inequalities in entering the labour market according to the native/immigrant background of young people. For instance in Estonia, according to a [2009 report \(531 KB PDF\)](#) from the Mannheim Centre for European Social Research ([MZES](#)), non-Estonians who are proficient in the Estonian language are less successful labour market entrants than ethnic Estonians in terms of access to a higher occupational status job. In Germany, workers with a non-national background have more problems finding an apprenticeship or employment than nationals ([DE1012019Q](#), [DE1104019I](#)), although a [2011 report \(in German, 678 KB PDF\)](#) for the Federal Agency for Migrants and Refugees ([BAMF](#)) says that differences in employment status by national background are lower for younger workers than for older workers. A [2011 study by LO on young adults' working conditions \(in Swedish\)](#) shows that 28% of Swedish young entrants with a foreign background state that they can survive on their salary compared with 42% of their native Swedish counterparts. In addition, the proportion of young adults with a foreign background who have been harassed at work is double that of young native Swedish.

### **Family background**

According to a [2012 report \(in Bulgarian, 665 KB PDF\)](#) from the [Mediana Agency](#), a range of factors related to the family background of young workers such as the employment situation of

family members and the level of education and wealth of parents may have an influence on the quality of the jobs accessed by young individuals, often regardless of the attained education level. For instance, [UK research \(698 KB PDF\)](#) shows that young people from working class backgrounds experience different transitions to the labour market compared with those from middle class backgrounds. For example, young people from middle class backgrounds may accept temporary and part-time work while they study as an intermediary stage in transition to the labour market. But for working class young people, temporary and part-time work is usually the outcome rather than a part of the process, trapping them in low-paid and precarious work.

## Geographical location

The available literature suggests that the geographical location of young workers can also have an influence on their access to employment or their associated working conditions. For instance, a [2009 report \(in Dutch\)](#) from Steunpunt WSE shows that employment rates among young people are higher in the Flemish region of Belgium than in the Walloon and Brussels regions. In France, a [2008 report \(in French, 483 KB PDF\)](#) from the Economic and Social Council (CESE) found that young people from ‘special conflictive areas’ usually faced specific difficulties in entering the labour market, a feature reflected in higher unemployment rates. In Greece also, there are significant differences in youth unemployment rates between regions, where the most difficult situations can be found in regions such as Western Macedonia or Epirus in comparison to Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

Meanwhile, [annual BIBB data reports \(in German\)](#) highlight important differences in the type of contracts held by new eastern and western labour entrants (30 months after the end of apprenticeship training). For instance, the 2012 report shows that 53% and 43.9% of eastern Germans held a standard or a part-time contract compared with 62% and 35.9% of western Germans, respectively. Data from [Youth 2011 \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#) show that pay levels for young Polish entrants are higher in cities than in rural areas; the average difference between the first monthly wage between urban and rural labour markets is PLN 200 (around €50). In Romania, 94.2% of the young workers living in urban areas had a ‘significant job’ (defined as a long-term job or one with long hours) compared with 43.9% of those living in rural areas ([RO1002019I](#)).

## Occupational characteristics

### *Differences by economic sectors and occupations*

### Working conditions

The available data indicate important differences in the working conditions of young workers depending on the economic sector they work in. For instance, data from TNO show that young Dutch workers in the service sector usually experience worse working conditions; they are less likely to have a permanent full-time contract, more likely to work irregular hours and have less autonomy at work. According to the [2010 BIBB Datenreport \(in German\)](#), the health and social services, retail, Horeca, economic services and construction sectors in Germany employ about half of all unskilled young workers with no school-leaving certificate; employment of young people in these sectors is also characterised by low wages, overlong and usually unsocial working hours. Meanwhile, the [2012 BIBB Datenreport \(in German\)](#) shows that the health and social sector stands out as having an above average share of (female) part-time and temporary skilled young workers, while the [DGB Index Gute Arbeit, 2010 \(in German, 1.4 MB PDF\)](#) highlights the high time pressures in this sector.

In Finland, [data from FIOH \(in Finnish\)](#) show that young people in the wholesale and retail trade carry out regular day work less, have fewer working hours and can influence the length of the

working day less than young workers in general. Meanwhile, Finnish young people in health and social activities work less in permanent employment and in regular day work, can influence the length of the working day less, have to be more flexible in their working times, perceive more physical and psychological stress, and have more feelings of neglecting things at home than young workers in general. In Sweden, the [study by LO on young adults' working conditions \(in Swedish\)](#) found that 29%–38% of young employees in service-related industries (care, commerce and Horeca) are to a larger extent experiencing stress at work due to labour shortages, where in these sectors it is also more common among young entrants not to receive the agreed salary (30%) and to be denied breaks (34%). The ESRI national workplace surveys 2009 found that young Irish workers in the Horeca sector had the highest proportion of employees expecting not to be in their current job in six months' time, probably due to the lower proportion of permanent jobs within the sector.

### **Accidents at work**

Available data show that young people in less-skilled sectors and occupations have higher work-related risks than young people in skilled occupations. The Danish Working Environment Authority [report on industrial accidents 2011 \(in Danish, 293 KB PDF\)](#) shows that Danish young employees were overrepresented in occupational accidents in sectors such as construction and transport. According to a [report \(in Portuguese, 215 KB PDF\)](#) from the Office for Strategy and Planning at the Portuguese Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity, the occupational groups among young Portuguese workers most affected by work accidents in 2010 included 'craft and related trade workers' followed by 'service workers and shop and market sales workers' and 'unskilled workers'.

### **Wage differentials**

There are significant variations between sectors in the pay received by young workers as shown in a [2012 report \(in Estonian, 3.19 KB PDF\)](#) from the Centre for Policy Studies and a [2009 study \(in Estonian, 2.1 MB PDF\)](#) by researchers at Tartu University in Estonia. According to [data for 2011 \(in Hungarian\)](#), the monthly average income of recently graduated entrants to the labour market can differ from €300 in some low-paid sectors to €700 in high-tech sectors such as information and communications technology (ICT) and finance). Data from [Lithuanian Statistics](#) reveal extremely sizeable differences in earnings in some occupations within the 20–29 age group for 2010 such that the lowest gross average monthly wage was paid to food preparation assistants and cleaners (€259 and €273, respectively), whereas the highest gross average monthly wage was paid to administrative and commerce managers (€990). The report, [Youth 2011 \(in Polish, 5.9 MB PDF\)](#), shows that the economic sectors that offered the best salaries to young people (20–29 years old) in 2011 were ICT and telecommunications, the insurance and banking sector and some branches of heavy industry – in all cases, gross monthly wages were over €725.

### *Differences by enterprise size*

There is very limited information on the relationship between the working conditions of young workers and the size of the enterprise. However, due to the importance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the European economy, many young entrants find a job in such enterprises. For instance, a [2012 report \(in Spanish, 582 KB PDF\)](#) from IVIE found that 64.6% of new young labour market entrants start their working lives in enterprises with fewer than 50 employees).

The limited available evidence suggests that large companies offer better working conditions for young workers than small ones. According to the [FIOH survey on work and health \(in Finnish\)](#), long working hours and physical stress are more commonly perceived among young workers in SMEs than in large enterprises. In the UK, a [report \(1.0 MB PDF\)](#) by UKCES found that around



9% of young people entered enterprises where no training was provided and that this ratio was still higher for young workers in microenterprises, in particular those with two to four employees (22%). In addition, larger enterprises are more likely to offer formal apprenticeships to their own employees. In Italy, [research \(in Italian\)](#) in collaboration with IRES showed that the presence of permanent young employees increased with company size from 45.4% among microenterprises with fewer than 10 employees to 63.5% among enterprises with 250 and more employees.

## Recent trends in working conditions of young workers and young entrants

### Impact of the crisis: Employment and unemployment

The deterioration of a number of European national economies has had a negative effect on working conditions in general. Due to their limited bargaining powers in relation to other work collectives, young workers and particularly young entrants to the labour market have been especially affected by the deterioration of economic and employment conditions. As noted in the International Labour Office ([ILO](#)) report, [Global employment trends for youth 2012 \(1.1 MB PDF\)](#), this situation is reflected in their difficult integration into the labour market and their problems in achieving a standard/good-quality job, as well as in other elements such as irregular working times, access to training opportunities and increased psychological tensions at work due to reduced job security and other factors.

Eurostat data show that the employment rates of young people have decreased since the economic crisis began in 2008. The EU27 employment rate for young people less than 25 years old fell from 37.4% in 2008 to 32.9% in 2012 (Table 4); the situation was especially dramatic in Member States such as Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain in comparison with other more stable situations like in Austria, Germany and Sweden. The employment rate of young people aged between 25 and 29 also fell from 75.5% to 71.1% in the same period (Table 5).

**Table 4: Employment and unemployment rates for young people (15–24 years old), 2008–2012 (%)**

	Employment rate		Unemployment rate		Long-term unemployment (12 months or more) as % of total unemployment	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
<b>EU27</b>	37.4	32.9	15.6	22.8	22.8	32.4
<b>AT</b>	55.9	54.6	8.0	8.7	13.7	14.6
<b>BE</b>	27.4	25.3	18.0	19.8	27.4	29.3
<b>BG</b>	26.3	21.9	12.7	28.1	39.0	49.0
<b>CY</b>	38.0	28.1	9.0	27.8	n.a.	25.0
<b>CZ</b>	28.1	25.2	9.9	19.5	31.2	33.4
<b>DE</b>	46.6	46.6	10.6	8.1	29.3	23.3
<b>DK</b>	66.4	55.0	8.0	14.1	n.a.	9.0
<b>EE</b>	36.4	33.0	12.0	20.9	24.3	29.8
<b>EL</b>	23.5	13.1	22.1	55.3	36.0	49.0

	Employment rate		Unemployment rate		Long-term unemployment (12 months or more) as % of total unemployment	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
<b>ES</b>	36.0	18.2	24.6	53.2	10.4	35.6
<b>FI</b>	44.7	41.8	16.5	19.0	n.a.	4.9
<b>FR</b>	31.3	28.8	18.6	23.8	24.3	28.4
<b>HU</b>	20.0	18.6	19.9	28.1	32.2	31.2
<b>IE</b>	45.9	28.2	12.7	30.4	19.8	48.3
<b>IT</b>	24.4	18.6	21.3	35.3	38.2	49.7
<b>LT</b>	26.7	21.6	13.4	26.4	n.a.	25.7
<b>LU</b>	23.8	21.7	17.9	18.8	21.6	19.2
<b>LV</b>	37.2	28.7	13.1	28.4	14.1	30.9
<b>MT</b>	45.9	43.8	12.2	14.2	26.2	29.4
<b>NL</b>	69.3	63.3	5.3	9.5	11.0	13.8
<b>PL</b>	27.3	24.7	17.3	26.5	22.0	30.3
<b>PT</b>	34.7	23.6	16.4	37.7	25.5	30.9
<b>RO</b>	24.8	23.9	18.6	22.7	43.4	43.3
<b>SE</b>	42.2	40.2	20.2	23.6	3.5	7.1
<b>SI</b>	38.4	27.3	10.4	20.6	20.2	32.2
<b>SK</b>	26.2	20.1	19.0	34.0	52.8	56.3
<b>UK</b>	52.4	46.9	15.0	21.0	16.0	27.4
<b>NO</b>	57.3	52.2	7.5	8.5	4.8	8.9

Note: n.a. = not available.

Source: Eurostat

**Table 5: Employment and unemployment rates for young people (25–29 years old), 2008–2012 (%)**

	Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
<b>EU27</b>	75.5	71.1	8.6	13.8
<b>AT</b>	80.8	82.5	4.8	5.8
<b>BE</b>	80.1	75.9	9.0	11.1
<b>BG</b>	75.0	63.7	6.4	15.9
<b>CY</b>	81.8	74.4	4.8	15.8

	Employment rate		Unemployment rate	
	2008	2012	2008	2012
<b>CZ</b>	75.8	72.3	4.1	8.9
<b>DE</b>	74.8	77.6	8.4	6.5
<b>DK</b>	83.3	71.8	3.4	11.0
<b>EE</b>	78.9	73.3	5.2	10.8
<b>EL</b>	73.0	53.6	13.1	37.5
<b>ES</b>	74.7	58.9	13.6	32.2
<b>FI</b>	79.3	74.8	6.7	8.9
<b>FR</b>	78.8	74.9	9.2	12.9
<b>HU</b>	71.1	67.3	9.1	14.0
<b>IE</b>	79.7	67.7	6.8	17.3
<b>IT</b>	64.3	57.3	11.0	17.9
<b>LT</b>	77.3	75.7	6.1	14.3
<b>LU</b>	74.4	78.7	10.8	6.7
<b>LV</b>	80.3	74.6	8.3	14.6
<b>MT</b>	80.9	82.6	4.6	5.3
<b>NL</b>	88.4	83.4	2.2	5.5
<b>PL</b>	76.3	73.1	8.2	13.1
<b>PT</b>	78.7	71.0	10.8	20.1
<b>RO</b>	69.2	67.8	6.7	10.7
<b>SE</b>	80.6	77.2	6.7	9.5
<b>SI</b>	82.9	72.9	6.5	15.0
<b>SK</b>	73.7	68.0	10.5	17.9
<b>UK</b>	79.7	76.9	5.7	8.7
<b>NO</b>	83.7	80.0	3.5	4.3

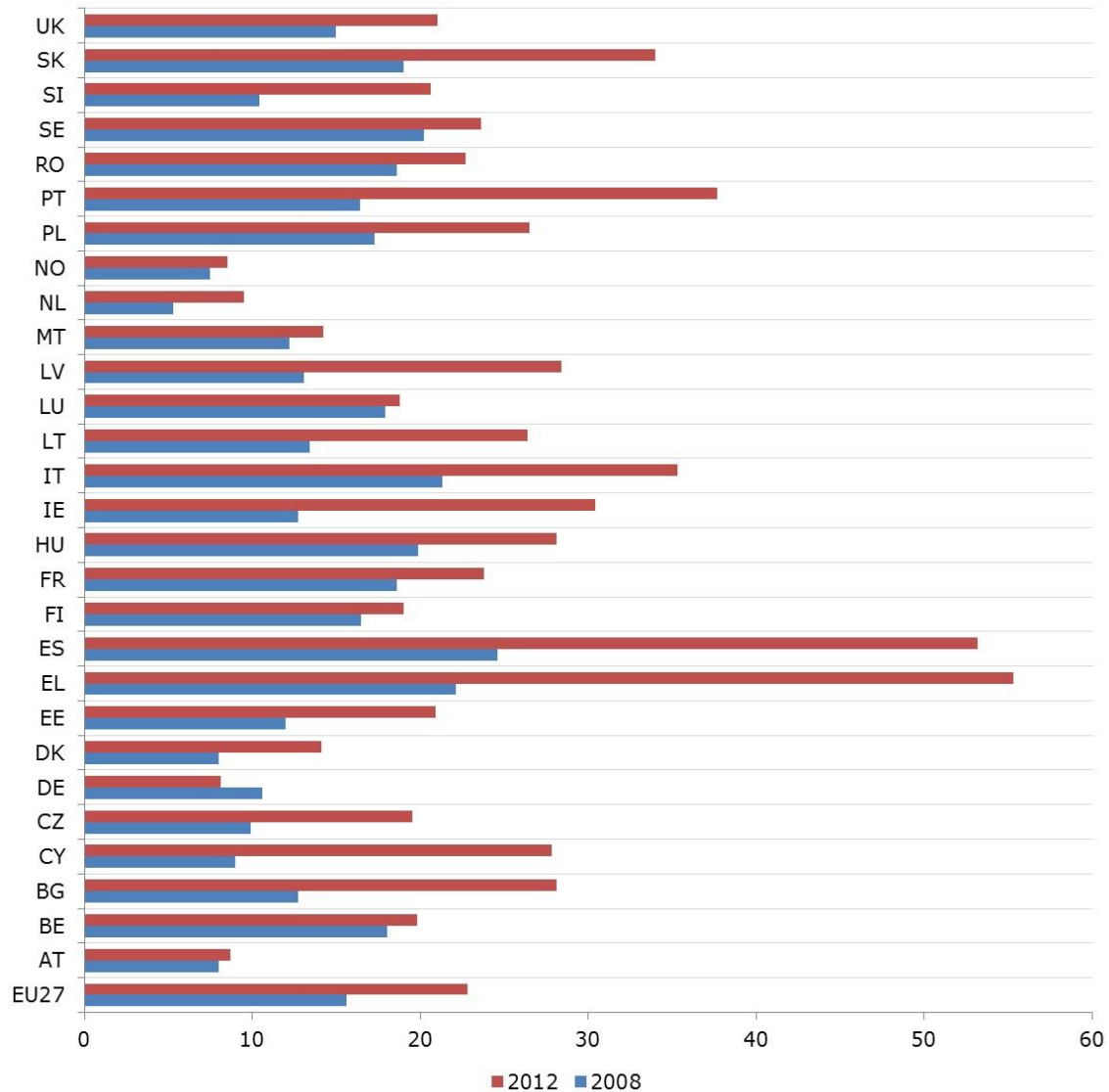
Source: Eurostat

Unemployment rates among young people have increased in recent years in nearly all EU Member States and Norway, the only exception being Germany (and Luxembourg for the 25–29 age group). The EU27 unemployment rate for young people less than 25 years old went up from 15.6% in 2008 to 22.8% in 2012 (Table 4) and the unemployment rate for the 25–29 age group increased from 8.6% to 13.8% in the same period (Table 5). Unfortunately, this growth was higher than for the average population as detailed in the European Commission report [Labour market developments in Europe 2012 \(4.3 MB PDF\)](#). Some Member States experienced a much more dramatic evolution in their unemployment rates, that is, the already mentioned cases of

Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain plus central and eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia (Figure 3).

Eurostat data for 2012 show that the proportion of young people aged under 25 in long-term unemployment (that is, for more than a year) was particularly high in Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Romania and Slovakia in 2012 – well above 40% in all cases (Table 4).

*Figure 3: Unemployment rates for young people (15–24 years old), 2008–2012 (%)*



**Figure 3: Unemployment rates for young people (15–24 years old), 2008–2012 (%)**

Source: Eurostat

These data are confirmed by evidence from national reports. Thus, a [Belgian survey \(in Dutch\)](#) suggested that almost 90% of young Belgians thought that the crisis had negatively impacted on their chances in the labour market. They believed themselves to be in a disadvantaged position in recruitment procedures as they had to compete with older people with more work experience also seeking work. In Estonia, a recent study revealed that entering the labour market for the first time was easier in 2005 (economic boom period) than in 2008 (first year of crisis) (Roots, 2011). In Spain, only 21.4% of the young labour market entrants claimed to have a ‘positive’ or ‘very

positive' perception of the situation of the Spanish labour market in 2011 compared with nearly half in 2008 according to an [IVIE report \(in Spanish, 582 KB PDF\)](#). Slovenian research found that the lack of employment opportunities in the labour market had encouraged many young people to continue their studies to achieve higher levels of education although, paradoxically, these higher levels of education are making young people even less employable as they are too expensive for employers (Lavrič et al, 2010).

### *Rise of insecure jobs*

The economic crisis has not only negatively affected the chances of young workers in general and young entrants in particular of accessing the labour market, it has also resulted in a higher proportion of more insecure, temporary jobs for those young people who have a job. The number of EU27 young employees under 25 years old working under temporary employment contracts increased slightly from 40.2% in 2008 to 42.1% in 2012, with the highest increases taking place in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Ireland and Malta; in other countries such as Denmark or Germany the proportion of temporary employment fell. The presence of part-time employment among young workers less than 25 years old increased between 2008 and 2012 in all EU Member States (from 26.3% to 31.1% for the EU27), as did the percentage of involuntary part-time within the total (from 25.7% in 2008 to 29.1% in 2012 for the EU27), although with important differences among Member States (Table 6).

**Table 6: Young people (15–24 years old) in part-time, involuntary part-time and temporary employment, 2008–2012 (%)**

	Part-time		Involuntary part-time		Temporary	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
<b>EU27</b>	26.3	31.1	25.7	29.1	40.2	42.1
<b>AT</b>	18.0	18.8	14.6	12.4	34.9	35.6
<b>BE</b>	20.7	25.6	38.2	22.4	29.5	31.4
<b>BG</b>	3.3	4.2	n.a.	n.a.	9.5	9.5
<b>CY</b>	12.0	18.8	39.2	56.4	20.8	18.7
<b>CZ</b>	5.5	9.9	5.5	19.6	15.6	27.0
<b>DE</b>	20.8	21.7	24.7	13.1	56.7	53.6
<b>DK</b>	57.4	65.0	6.5	9.1	23.6	20.9
<b>EE</b>	12.9	18.6	n.a.	n.a.	6.0	12.9
<b>EL</b>	13.2	19.4	47.6	65.4	29.2	25.9
<b>ES</b>	22.9	35.6	32.9	56.2	59.4	62.4
<b>FI</b>	36.9	39.2	17.3	20.9	39.6	42.0
<b>FR</b>	22.6	23.1	43.0	46.6	52.5	55.5
<b>HU</b>	5.4	9.7	33.9	51.8	20.0	22.4
<b>IE</b>	26.6	48.2	12.1	33.7	22.0	34.9
<b>IT</b>	20.7	27.5	52.6	74.0	43.3	52.9

	Part-time		Involuntary part-time		Temporary	
	2008	2012	2008	2012	2008	2012
LT	10.7	15.5	n.a.	n.a.	7.3	9.1
LU	7.0	22.7	n.a.	18.9	39.3	39.0
LV	9.6	15.0	n.a.	28.5	6.5	9.8
MT	14.5	20.6	29.0	28.3	9.2	16.6
NL	70.9	76.7	4.4	9.2	45.2	51.2
PL	14.2	16.7	13.6	26.1	62.8	66.4
PT	10.4	20.1	42.2	45.5	54.2	56.5
RO	14.7	17.8	70.6	70.8	4.3	5.8
SE	45.7	48.5	39.7	44.6	53.6	55.7
SI	31.4	38.3	1.7	4.1	69.8	72.0
SK	3.5	7.3	n.a.	47.7	12.6	19.1
UK	34.7	40.3	n.a.	28.5	12.0	14.9
NO	54.7	57.9	10.2	12.9	26.2	24.4

Note: n.a. = not available.

Source: Eurostat

The previous data are confirmed by a large number of national studies. Thus, surveys from Finland (FIOH study), Germany ([2012 report \(in German, 2.3 MB PDF\)](#) from the Social Science Research Centre Berlin (WZB), Hungary ([data from KSH \(in Hungarian\)](#)), the Netherlands (TNO study), Slovenia (Lavrič et al, 2010), Sweden (LO study) and the UK ([HECSU study \(3.3 MB PDF\)](#)) suggest a reduction in young workers in permanent employment, and an increase in the presence of other non-standard forms of employment (such as part-time or temporary agency work). A [work climate survey \(in Bulgarian, 827 KB PDF\)](#) suggests an increase in the presence of young Bulgarian workers working without a labour contract and the KSH data confirm an increase in the presence of young Hungarian workers with temporary agency work contracts. An Estonian study suggests that the majority of the young labour entrants in 2005 moved relatively fast to full-time jobs, while during the crisis the entry patterns are much more diverse (for example, part-time job or temporary work) (Roots, 2011).

This growth of temporary employment and part-time work suggests that these types of work arrangements are the only option available for young workers in a precarious labour market context. Thus, a [2010 report from Steunpunt WSE \(in Dutch\)](#) shows that 62% of young people in Belgium were prepared to adapt their job expectations because of the crisis, and 75% were prepared to accept a job other than in the field they had studied. Similarly, the Austrian WCI shows that the focus of aspiration among young workers moved between 2008 and 2012 from aspiring career advancements to the expectation to stay in the same job; in 2012, 32% of respondents reported aspiring to advance to a higher occupational position in the same field (44% in 2008), whereas almost the same share (33%) of young entrants claimed they wanted to stay in the same position and occupation (16% in 2008). However, many employers may favour placing young people on temporary contracts because they are cautious about creating longer-term jobs given the uncertainty unleashed during the crisis, while at the same time reducing labour costs.

These developments are resulting in increasing levels of job insecurity among young European workers. While some 20% of Bulgarian young workers were found in a [study by the Mediana Agency \(in Bulgarian, 665 KB PDF\)](#) to consider themselves ‘very likely’ to lose their job in 2010, this percentage had increased to 48% in 2012. In the Netherlands, 26.2% of young workers highlighted the risk of job loss in 2012 compared with 14.3% in 2007 in TNO annual surveys. In Spain, the perceived risk of becoming unemployed also increased – 25% of workers aged 16–34 considered this risk to be high in 2007 compared with 56.4% in 2011 according to a [report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT. In Portugal, a [2012 study \(in Portuguese\)](#) by the Institute of Social Sciences (OPJ) at the University of Lisbon found that poor economic prospects meant that many young people under 25 years old are emigrating to find new job opportunities, with an increasing presence of young people with university degrees among this group.

### *Rise in non-standard working time practices*

Evidence from a number of countries shows an increase in irregular working time practices from 2008 onwards. An increase in the share of young people working non-social hours (evening, nights, weekends and so on has been shown in research from:

- Estonia – [2012 report from the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs \(in Estonian, 4.7 MB PDF\)](#);
- Finland – FIOH study;
- Netherlands – TNO study.

The percentage of young Finnish people having to be flexible daily or weekly in their working time increased from 20% in 2009 to 31% in 2012 (data from FIOH). The proportion of young workers who could influence the length of their working day decreased from 38% in 2009 to 31% in 2012 ([data from the Finnish Ministry of Employment and the Economy \(in Finnish\)](#)).

In line with these results, the self-perceived autonomy at work among young workers (that is, their ability to determine the order of work, their own work pace and so on) has deteriorated in some countries since 2007 according to [data \(in Dutch\)](#) from [SERV - Social Economic Council of Flanders](#) in Belgium and data from TNO for the Netherlands. For example, 17.5% of young Dutch workers reported in 2012 that they were never allowed determine for themselves how to perform their job compared with 11.8% in 2007. The increasing power of employers to pose stricter regulations on different work-related elements (including working time), together with employees’ increasing fear of losing their job during the economic crisis may explain these findings.

### *Decline in chances of training and apprenticeships*

The economic crisis has also had an impact on the training opportunities offered to young workers in general and young entrants in particular. The participation of young Finnish and German workers in employer-funded continuing training decreased from 2007 to 2010, according to data from FIOH and BIBB, respectively. In Austria, the satisfaction of young workers in general and young labour market entrants in particular with the opportunities for further training showed a much more marked deterioration between 2008 and 2012 compared with older workers (WCI data).

One of the most important challenges for young people during the crisis is related to the reduced possibility of obtaining an apprenticeship as a part of vocational training ([DK1101019Q](#)). In Ireland, for example, a total of 18,237 completed the three off-the-job phases of apprenticeship training in 2008, whereas the number of new apprentices fell significantly in 2008 to 3,765, 44% less than the number registered in 2007. According to the authors of the [FÁS quarterly labour market commentary for spring/summer 2010 \(254 MB PDF\)](#), this reduced level of registrations

arose mainly in the construction-related apprenticeship trades and reflects the large reduction of activity in the Irish construction sector.

### *Effects on health and well-being*

Belgian and German research suggests a deterioration of some indicators of health and well-being during the crisis among younger workers. For instance, the share of Belgian younger workers reporting stress at work increased from 32.4% in 2007 to 38.5% in 2010, whereas the percentage of the total group of workers affected by stress at work only increased from 38.5% to 39.2% according to [data \(in Dutch\)](#) from SERV. In Germany, available comparisons between 2006 ([BIBB/BAuA employment survey 2005/2006 \(116 KB PDF\)](#)) and 2011 ([BIBB/BAuA employment survey 2011/2012 \(in German\)](#)) show an increase in physical strains (tiring or painful positions and heavy loads) as well as dangerous situations (loud noise, heavy loads, risky substances and very high/low temperatures).

### *Positive outcomes*

Despite all these negative elements, it is also possible to identify a number of countries and elements where the evolution has been much more satisfactory. For instance, in Austria, the percentage of young entrants who were satisfied with their income increased from 49% in 2008 to 61% in 2012 (WCI data). In Finland, young workers' work satisfaction increased from 2009 to 2012 (82% and 87% were 'very' or 'quite' satisfied, respectively) according to data from FIOH. Also in Finland, the [autumn 2012 edition of the Working Life Barometer \(in Finnish, 433 KB PDF\)](#) found that more than 90% of young workers felt in 2012 that they would be able to find a new job if necessary compared with negative expectations at the beginning of the crisis in 2009. In Norway, the level of job insecurity and the existing general working conditions of Norwegian young workers changed very little from 2007 to 2012, according to a [2012 report \(in Norwegian, 1.1 MB PDF\)](#) from the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority.

In other countries more affected by the crisis, some elements may have experienced a positive trend, sometimes as a result of the economic crisis itself. Despite the difficulties in Portugal and Spain, the incidence of accidents at work among the whole working population and young workers in particular experienced a downward trend, according to [data for 2010 \(in Portuguese, 215 KB PDF\)](#) from the Office for Strategy and Planning at the Portuguese Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity and a [2011 report \(in Spanish, 4.9 MB PDF\)](#) from INSHT. This result is likely to be due to a combination of lower workloads and more preventive health and safety measures in enterprises. In the Netherlands, TNO data reveal reduced workloads in companies due to the crisis have resulted in less feelings of having to neglect family activities due to work issues. In Spain, the percentage of workers aged 16–34 who think that they 'always' or 'frequently' receive support from colleagues increased from 71.5% in 2007 to 77.5%, as outlined in the INSHT 2011 report.

## **Future trends in employment levels and working conditions**

There are very few reports from which to provide a picture of the expected evolution of employment levels and working conditions of young labour market entrants in the near future. Studies in countries such as Ireland ([ESRI's quarterly economic commentary, winter 2012](#)), the Netherlands (Centraal Planbureau's [Central Economic Plan 2013 \(in Dutch\)](#)) and Spain ([Central Bank of Spain report, March 2013 \(in Spanish\)](#)) do not envisage an improvement in the particularly high youth unemployment rates in the coming years. In addition, a [2010 report from Steunpunt WSE \(in Dutch\)](#) shows that 60% of young Belgians think that it will be difficult for them to find a job in the future years and less-skilled young people have more fear of the consequences of the crisis. In Spain, a [study \(in Spanish\)](#) conducted in 2010 by [Foundation SM](#) (the crisis has intensified since then) showed that 46.3% of Spanish young people aged 15–24



declared a ‘lack of confidence in the future’, and 6 out of 10 argued that the current economic crisis would have a ‘very negative’ effect on their professional and personal future. Some Czech research suggests that, even though the unemployment rates of young people may decline due to economic recovery, the use of fixed-term contracts and other flexible arrangements is likely to be increasingly applied among young people in the near future due to the introduced national measures aiming at a higher labour market flexibility ([CZ1212029Q](#)).

In some countries (Ireland, Portugal, Spain), available studies also suggest an increase in migration outflows by young people as a feasible option to avoid difficulties within national labour markets. In Portugal, [recent studies \(in Portuguese\)](#) show that 69% of university students have the intention of emigrating after completing their degree due to the lack of opportunities at home. In Spain, [data from the Electoral Census of Spaniards residing abroad \(in Spanish\)](#) show that there were 5.5% more people enrolled in this census in 2012 than in 2011 and nearly 28.6% more than in 2008, where the largest proportion were well-educated, young university graduates. In any case, a [2013 report from HK Danmark \(in Danish\)](#) and a [2012 report \(in Portuguese, 1.1 MB PDF\)](#) from the Centre for Social Intervention Studies ([CESIS](#)) suggest that these negative expectations and the likely increase in long-term youth unemployment levels will pose a number of challenges for the future in terms of increasing social inequalities and derived social conflicts, unless some positive strong actions are put in place.

## Initiatives to improve employment and working conditions of young entrants

### Recent initiatives by the European Commission

The [Youth Employment Package](#) proposed by the European Commission in December 2012 to help Member States tackle youth unemployment and social exclusion included the Recommendation to launch a ‘Youth Guarantee’ in every country. This would involve Member States ensuring that all young people up to 25 years old receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed.

To steer financial support to those regions and individuals struggling most with youth employment and inactivity, the European Council agreed in February 2013 to create a dedicated [Youth Employment Initiative](#) (YEI).

This was followed in June 2013 by the Commission Communication entitled [Working together for Europe’s young people – A call to action on youth unemployment \(749 KB PDF\)](#) which aims to accelerate implementation of the Youth Guarantee.

The Youth Employment Package also announced a [European Alliance for Apprenticeships](#) to improve the quality and supply of apprenticeships across the EU and to change people’s perceptions of apprenticeship-style learning. To enable young people to acquire high-quality work experience under safe conditions, the Commission issued a Communication in December 2012, [Towards a quality framework on traineeships](#), a second-stage consultation of the EU-level social partners under Article 154 of the [Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union](#).

[Youth on the Move](#) is a comprehensive package of policy initiatives on education and employment for young people in Europe. Launched in 2010, it is part of the [Europe 2020](#) strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Youth on the Move aims to:

- improve young people’s education and employability;
- reduce high youth unemployment;
- increase the youth employment rate.

Within its framework, the YEI includes actions to drive down youth unemployment.

The Commission is also working to assist labour mobility by making young people more aware of job opportunities in other EU countries. It is currently piloting a new system to help young people seize the job opportunities advertised on [Eures](#) (European Employment Services), while helping SMEs to recruit young job-seekers from across Europe. [Your first EURES Job](#) helps young people to find jobs in other Member States.

## **Recent initiatives by national authorities**

The measures adopted by national governments usually favour access to employment, job creation and promoting the entry of young people into the labour market ('job creation' approach). They pay less attention to the quality of the jobs created for young people in terms of their associated working conditions ('job quality' approach). It can therefore be concluded that job quality is not a priority in most cases with the creation of jobs being the most important issue.

### *Employment opportunities*

Most national governments in Europe have applied different measures to ease the access of young people to work. Priority has been given to increasing employment opportunities among young people, especially in those countries where the crisis is particularly difficult and there are high unemployment rates among young people. For instance, given the high level of unemployment among young people in Spain, public initiatives there are focused on creating work opportunities, without a clear interest in working conditions. Similarly, in Ireland, given the scale of the economic crisis, measures directed at young entrants do not pay enough attention to the quality of jobs. In other countries, such as Bulgaria, Lithuania and Slovenia, there are specific measures targeting youth unemployment, but no particular measures aimed at improving the working conditions of young people.

Meanwhile there are some countries where young workers do not seem to be a specific target. In Estonia, there are no public measures that specifically aim to improve employment opportunities or working conditions for young entrants. In Germany, there are no active labour market policies aimed at young entrants apart from those inspired by EU programmes on mobility.

Among those countries that are explicitly applying measures in favour of young people's employment, some have focused on precise measures while others have designed comprehensive strategies (normally combining different specific measures). In all cases, the most extended type of measure for promoting young people's entry into the labour market (as a single initiative or included in a wider programme) is based on cutting the costs of labour as a way of encouraging employers to hire young workers. Thus, a relatively common option among European countries is to offer some type of possibility of public funding such as refunding social security contributions or grants for employers to cover salaries of young entrants. In some cases, these initiatives are specially aimed at people who are unskilled or have a low level of educational attainment, or have been out of work for a long time.

Many countries have applied specific measures for reducing employment costs such as Belgium, Hungary, Ireland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Norway, Slovakia, Sweden and the UK. In this context it is interesting to mention the case of Lithuania, where the measure 'Support for the First Job' offers compensation of a fixed part (23.3%) of the wage for a period of up to 12 months to employers hiring people aged 16–29 who have no previous employment experience. Similarly the government of Malta, through the Employment and Training Corporation ([ETC](#)), in 2011 introduced the [Employment Aid Programme](#). Under this programme, employers could benefit from a 50% subsidy on wage costs and employers' national insurance contributions after employing a young person under 25 years old within two years of them completing full-time

education and who had not previously obtained regular paid employment. As highlighted in [Parliamentary Question 32553](#), there were 2,383 participants up to the first week of March 2012.

Another national measure is [New-start Jobs \(in Swedish, 255 KB PDF\)](#), implemented in 2007 in Sweden. This scheme is directed at employers and grants them a tax credit equivalent to the general payroll tax for employment of young adults (20–25 years old) who have been unemployed, received activity compensation, sickness benefits or participated in employment policy programmes for six months. The objective pursued was to prevent long-term unemployment and social exclusion. A [2012 report \(in Swedish, 859 KB PDF\)](#) from the Institute for Evaluation of Labour Market and Education Policy ([IFAU](#)) concluded that 63% of all ‘new start jobs’ related to the displacement of jobs that would have come about even without such a relaunch subsidy.

Similarly, in Slovakia, the programme ‘Support of Jobs Creation’ offers a financial contribution to employers who create a job and recruit a young unemployed person under 29 years old to fill it. Also, in the UK the [Youth Contract](#) pays employers up to GBP 2,275 (about €2,668 as at 1 November 2013) for recruiting an 18–24 year-old to work 16–29 hours per week.

Measures based on reducing employment costs are frequently combined with other initiatives and can also be part of wider national programmes or strategies. This is the case, for instance, in Greece, Portugal and Spain. These countries, which have been badly hit by the economic crisis, have recently approved wide-ranging programmes supporting the employment of young people which also promote entrepreneurship and training.

In January 2013, Greece approved an action plan for supporting employment and entrepreneurship among young people. This plan includes a wide variety of programmes, mostly related to fields such as:

- training, for example, a voucher is given for entry into the labour market of unemployed young people which includes training up to 100 hours in combination with educational mentoring, traineeships and so on;
- entrepreneurship, including initiatives such as the promotion of innovative entrepreneurship plus advisory guidance among young people, or a pilot project for supporting young people in creating social cooperative enterprises;
- subsidy programmes for hiring young highly qualified people.

During 2012, Portugal approved the [Young Impulse \(in Portuguese\)](#) programme, which is structured around three main types of measures:

- professional apprenticeships;
- support for hiring and entrepreneurship;
- support to encourage investment.

Two of the measures are particularly relevant: the ‘Employment Passport’, based on internship programmes, and the ‘Support to Hiring via Reimbursement of the Single Social Tax’. A total of 1,525 out of 2,981 applications were approved for the former and 887 out of 1,638 applications for the latter.

In Spain, the national government recently launched [Royal Law Decree 4/2013 of 22 February on policy measures for entrepreneurs and support for economic growth and employment creation \(in Spanish\)](#). This decree defines the Spanish Strategy on Entrepreneurship and Young Employment 2013–2016, which is intended to reduce youth unemployment levels via either self-employment or salaried employment. The main measures covered by the decree are:

- actions to support self-employment activities by young people under 30 years old (among them, a new reduced social contribution quota);

- a number of policy initiatives aimed at fostering the involvement of young workers in enterprises in the social economy sector;
- measures promoting the hiring of young unemployed people, basically via bonuses in social security contributions.

Linked to this and concerning entrepreneurship in particular, the Ministry of Economy ([ME](#)) in Romania approved a specific initiative to stimulate young entrepreneurs to start and develop micro enterprises. The objective is to develop entrepreneurial skills among young people. The aid granted can be up to €10,000 per entrepreneur.

### *Improving employability of young workers*

Many countries have combined measures to reduce employment costs with the need to counter lack of working experience. It is common to find specific types of contracts for young workers (commonly based on public subsidies/funding, in both the public and private sectors), which emphasise the importance of training and skills development so as to promote young people's employability. Initiatives aimed at encouraging employers to recruit young workers through the reduction of costs and supplemented with training programmes can be found, for example, in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, France, Lithuania and the UK.

In the case of France, the government's 'Jobs for the Future' programme is intended to help young people gain access to the labour market ([FR1209021I](#)). Jobs for the Future is essentially concerned with the public sector; jobs will be subsidised by the state for a period of one to three years at a rate of 75%. In exchange, the employer will have to guarantee the supervision, counselling and training of the young beneficiaries. The aim is to help young entrants gain a qualification that should lead to lasting integration in the labour market. Also in France, another measure aimed at facilitating youth employment is the so-called 'Generation Contract'. This subsidises young-older pairs of people to boost the employment of young people and secure the employment of older people, while ensuring the transmission of skills.

In Poland, [Youth in the Labour Market \(in Polish\)](#) is a versatile programme, still in its pilot phase, designed to stimulate the employability of people aged 15–30 years. Among the different support options offered are an educational token (voucher) for training, an internship token that almost entirely finances a six-month internship, a token for employers allowing them a refund of employment costs pertaining to employees under 30 years old and grants for the reimbursement of the costs of relocation.

Generally speaking, training programmes are considered a convenient tool for improving the employability of young labour market entrants. For example, in Cyprus, the Human Resources Development Authority ([HRDA](#)) has implemented a series of multiple actions for [lifelong learning](#). Among the measures offered to the group of young entrants are:

- 'Training of Secondary Education Graduates' where all costs are covered for the training part and attendance at the in-company part, and a weekly allowance is paid to participants (training for 392 people was subsidised in 2011 and 466 people in 2010);
- 'Training of Tertiary Education Graduates', which aims to recruit and train unemployed graduates – the subsidy to the employer is 60%, 70% or 80% (there were 544 participants in 2011 and 198 in 2010);
- 'Training on the Apprenticeship System' where the objective is the employment and training of young people through the apprenticeship system – subsidies are paid to employers for the wages of apprentices (subsidies were paid to 111 employers in 2011 and 134 in 2010).

In Slovakia, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family ([MPSVR SR](#)) implemented a national project known as 'Practical Experience of Graduates', whose objective was to support graduates to enter the labour market with an emphasis on acquiring practical experience and

professional skills in a working environment. Similarly, in Austria, ‘supra-company apprenticeship training’ is a key initiative aimed at ensuring all young people are guaranteed an apprenticeship placement and so improve young people’s opportunities of entering the labour market.

A small number of countries have even applied measures focused on students (before the end of their degree) to boost contacts between employers and potential employees. In September 2012, national authorities in the Czech Republic implemented a project entitled [Training for Young Potential Workers \(in Czech\)](#), which enables secondary school and university students in the last years of their studies to acquire work experience before the end of their studies through a training period in companies.

In the Netherlands, the government implemented an initiative aimed at reducing the number of students dropping out of school; the idea behind this is that preventing youth unemployment starts with preventing ‘drop-outs’.

The ‘youth coaching’ scheme in Austria is designed as a preventive measure to minimise the numbers of early school leavers. It offers individual support including consultancy, supervision and assistance.

In Italy, the 2009 governmental ‘Plan for young employability through the integration between learning and work’ consists of a set of measures on the education and training system by pointing out its alleged self-referring design as the main factor negatively affecting young work perspectives.

### *Youth Guarantee initiatives in the Nordic countries*

The Youth Guarantee programmes applied in some north European countries such as Finland, Norway and Sweden also aim to facilitate the employment of young people. In 2013, the Finnish government launched the [Youth Guarantee](#) programme, which includes an obligation that every person less than 25 years old and every recent graduate under 30 years of age be offered work, a traineeship or a study, workshop or labour market rehabilitation place within three months of becoming unemployed. Similarly, in Norway, a Youth Guarantee was introduced in 2007 by which unemployed young people less than 24 years old are entitled to participate in labour market programmes. In Sweden, the most prominent recent national measure is New-start Jobs, which targets unemployed people aged 16–25 starting three months after they register at the employment services. The policy’s objective is improvement of competence so as to increase young people’s employability. A [2011 evaluation of the guarantee \(in Swedish, 496 KB PDF\)](#) argues that the probability of obtaining a job is slightly higher among young people who participated in the employment guarantee compared with non-participants. A [2010 report from IFAU \(in Swedish, 471 KB PDF\)](#) stresses that the employment guarantee had in fact focused on organised job-seeking. Furthermore, 63% of the participants were seeking a job and participated in activities for less than 10 hours per week.

In addition, there are countries that have implemented wide-ranging programmes aimed at making it easier for young people to get a first job, including activities such as information and career guidance, and training. For instance, the national initiative [Jobs for Young People in Bulgaria \(in Bulgarian, 103 KB Microsoft Word\)](#), includes:

- activation measures such as information, registration at labour offices and consultations;
- measures aimed at increasing the employability of young people – guidance services, training, and development of professional qualifications and skills (including the recently launched voucher system).

In Latvia, all major public programmes and policies have sections dealing with youth employment including the issue of how to improve entry into employment for young workers. The main tools and measures used to achieve the policy goals are:

- facilitating access to professional education and improving quality of education;
- assistance in career development;
- information and consultation.

As a result of actions taken during 2012–2013, employment is expected to be provided for at least 22,000 young people, reducing the youth unemployment rate by 5% and reducing the share of NEETs (not in education, employment or training) for the 15–24 age group to 19%.

### *Improvement of working conditions*

In Finland, the Occupational Safety Unit of Regional Administrative Agencies carries out monitoring of employers who employ young workers. Similarly, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority ([Arbeidstilsynet](#)) paid special attention in autumn 2011 to apprentices and young entrepreneurs in Unge Entreprenørskap ([UE](#)), a member of the worldwide organisation [JA Worldwide](#). About 100 inspections were conducted in establishments that had apprentices to see how the apprentices were treated as employees and to check that the employer had ensured a good and safe working environment for them. In collaboration with other stakeholders, the Norwegian Labour Inspection Authority has also initiated several campaigns to raise awareness of young workers.

In Denmark, the government and several parties agreed in 2011 on [A strategy for working environment efforts up to 2020 \(103 KB PDF\)](#). This strategy contains 19 initiatives of which one is targeting young and new employees because this group is overrepresented in occupational accident statistics. As a part of the strategy, the Danish Working Environment Authority will put in place communication initiatives on health and safety at work aimed at young people. Also in 2011, the NFA initiated a new research study on [Safe work for young employees \(in Danish\)](#) to obtain information on why young employees are more likely to be involved in occupational accidents than older employees.

In Cyprus, efforts to improve the working conditions of young labour market entrants have been made since 2007 following a decision of the Council of Ministers on the ‘Scheme for training new entrants to employment in health and safety issues’.

Linked to the issue of the working conditions of young workers are national measures related to salaries. In the Czech Republic, the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs ([MoLSA](#)) issued in June 2012 [Statutory Decree No. 246/2012 Coll. \(in Czech\)](#), which repealed lower tariffs on the minimum wage so as to apply principles of equality in employee remuneration and to prevent discrimination of disadvantaged groups of workers. Previous regulations allowed the minimum wage to be 10% lower than the standard minimum wage in the case of workers aged 18–21 within the first six months of their first employment and 20% lower in the case of workers under 18 years old ([CZ0512101T](#)).

In contrast, given the severity of the economic crisis in Greece, which has led to significant public budget cuts and high unemployment rates, the Cabinet of Ministers Act No. 6/28.2.2012 provided for a general reduction by 22% of the minimum limits of wages and daily pay set by the National General Collective Employment Agreement (EGSSE). Especially for young people under 25 years of age, the act also provided for an additional 10% reduction, resulting in an overall reduction of remuneration by 32% for this age group.

The Irish government has cut social welfare rates for young workers, as they were perceived to be too high and acted as a disincentive to young people entering their first job. The idea is that this

measure is not discriminatory, but rather a targeted measure aimed at protecting young people from welfare dependency.

Finally, with regard to working contracts and labour stability, the 2012 labour market reform in Italy limited the opportunities to use non-permanent contracts and bogus self-employment (especially as ‘project collaborators’ or ‘associated in participation’) by promoting apprenticeships as the entry point into the labour market and stable positions. Unfortunately the reform left unchanged the vast array of 46 non-standard employment contracts for both employees and economically dependent workers (workers who are formally self-employed but depend on a single employer for their income).

### **Recent initiatives of social partners**

In some countries, social dialogue has been negatively affected or has even ceased as a consequence of the economic crisis. In Ireland, social partners’ engagement in social dialogue has decreased dramatically since the country entered recession in 2008 and following the breakdown of social partnership in late 2009. Consequently, the state alone is now responsible for policies to improve working conditions for young people nationally.

At the same time, under a context of economic crisis, social partners in many countries have adopted the strategy of close cooperation in order to maintain existing jobs. For instance, in Portugal, for the dissemination of ‘Young Impulse’ (launched by Portuguese public authorities), cooperation protocols were signed with the General Workers’ Union ([UGT](#)), the Confederation of Portuguese Industry ([CIP](#)), the Portuguese Trade and Services Confederation ([CCP](#)), the Portuguese Confederation of Farmers ([CAP](#)) and the Portuguese Confederation of Tourism ([CTP](#)). Similarly, in Slovakia, social partners have supported government measures aimed at reducing the unemployment of young people and young people entering the labour market; however, they have not developed their own initiatives and projects in this area.

In the Czech Republic, social partners have accepted greater flexibility of employment relationships as a way of maintaining employment levels (often applied to young workers). This demonstrates that social partners are concerned about the situation of young workers, though in connection with the unemployment rate whereas the specific working conditions of young employees are not the focus of the debate.

### *Employment versus working conditions*

As a consequence of the economic downturn, the main concern in most cases has been employment levels among young people rather than working conditions. For example, in Estonia, issues such as high unemployment among young people and the large proportion of NEETs have been the focus of social partners in recent years and the issue of working conditions for young entrants has not been a priority. Similarly, in Hungary, there are no special programmes for improving working conditions, but youth organisations are concentrating on obtaining work. Also in the UK, most measures put in place are aimed at increasing the participation of young people in the labour market and no examples of measures designed to improve working conditions have been identified.

Although unemployment is currently the most significant worry, some trade unions have established specific units aimed at supporting young workers and improving their working conditions. In Greece, the General Confederation of Greek Workers ([GSEE](#)) has set up a secretariat to deal with the situation experienced by young workers including aspects such as part-time and temporary employment, uninsured labour and deregulation of the labour market, taking actions and initiatives to place emphasis on those issues. Similarly, in Estonia, the Estonian Trade Union Confederation ([EAKL](#)) has a youth committee where the different problems faced by

young people in the labour market and possible solutions are discussed. In Hungary, trade unions organise youth committees and events, and some training.

In Spain, a remarkable initiative by social partners in past years is the [Observatory of Youth Employment \(in Spanish\)](#) developed by the General Workers' Confederation ([UGT](#)). This observatory is intended to provide and compile information and analysis on employment issues specifically related to young people from a labour, economic and social perspective.

There are also public campaigns against the poor conditions experienced by young people. In Luxembourg, the Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions ([LCGB](#)) launched a public relations campaign called 'A job for all' to stress the fact that employment among young people is far from representing full employment. In Poland, trade unions address issues of fixed-term and civil law contracts as prevailing forms of employment among young people. When the anti-crisis legislation was discussed in Poland in 2009, trade union leaders expressed their concern about the situation of young people in the labour market ([PL0909019I](#)).

Some countries have experienced significant protests against labour legislation affecting young people. For instance, in Slovenia, the trade union movement organised joint protests with young groups in May 2010 against the Mini Job Act. This new legislation envisaged more flexible employment conditions in 'mini jobs' (less than 14 hours per week) and was likely to affect mainly working students, young unemployed, women and other vulnerable persons. Following the government's success in passing the Mini Jobs Act using parliamentary procedures, the Association of Free Trade Unions ([ZSSS](#)) and the Student Organisation of Slovenia ([ŠOS](#)) began collecting signatures in 2011 for a referendum to stop the act's implementation. The referendum succeeded and legislation on 'mini jobs' was not adopted.

### *Difference in social partner opinion*

Not surprisingly, the opinion of business organisations about young workers' working conditions does not always coincide with the trade unions' perspective. For instance, in Germany, trade unions see the non-standard forms of work of young workers as pioneering future forms of work and employment. In contrast, employers see non-standard jobs of young entrants as transitory phenomena before reaching permanent employment, and employers place emphasis on the school-to-apprenticeship transition ([DE1011029I](#)). Similarly, in Sweden, the trade union LO argues that precarious employment (part-time and fixed-term) leads to poorer working conditions. But according to a [2012 report \(in Swedish, 1.2 MB PDF\)](#) by the [Confederation of Swedish Enterprise](#) is convinced that activities should include revision of liberal employment laws to include increased acceptance of fixed-term contracts and increased wage differentiation with the objective of increasing young people's employability.

### *Employer and company-level initiatives*

However, many initiatives have been implemented by the employers' side to address young people's issues in the labour market. In Estonia, the Estonian Employers' Confederation ([ETTK](#)), together with the Smart Work Association and Estonian Unemployment Insurance Fund ([EUIF](#)), launched the project 'Nupp tööle' (translates as 'Button to work') which lasted from May 2012 to May 2013. The project was funded by the [European Social Fund](#). Around 200 young people aged 16–24 years who are not in employment, education or active in entrepreneurship were involved in the project. The aim was to help them find suitable jobs (as opposed to any job) through active labour market services. As at January 2012, 60 of the participants had found a job, mainly in the manufacturing and service sectors.

In Greece, a Hellenic Federation of Enterprises ([SEV](#)) project called 'Innovative entrepreneurship – hosting and sponsorship of new business initiatives' aims to encourage young scientists to start a business. The initiative seeks to create a climate of cooperation between the academic and the



business communities. Similarly, in Poland, the [Business Centre Club](#) and the Polish Confederation of Private Employers Lewiatan ([PKPP Lewiatan](#)) regularly organise seminars and training courses to adjust students' skills to market needs, as well as to promote entrepreneurship among young people and increase their chances in recruitment processes.

There are also initiatives at company level. For instance, a [2013 report on the youth employment challenge \(2.0 MB PDF\)](#) from UKCES highlights a number of examples of employer initiatives in the UK offering work experience, apprenticeships and routes into employment for young workers. In France, there are numerous initiatives taken at company level such as the action lead by [Institut de l'Entreprise](#), which aims at creating links between young people and companies so as to improve the access and conditions of young workers in the labour market. In particular this action identifies good practices from its member companies concerning young workers.

### *Joint initiatives*

In addition to measures implemented by trade unions on one side or by employers on the other side, there are some social agreements arranged by both trade unions and enterprises together. In Germany, the main joint initiatives are collective agreements arranged for the permanent employment of trainees ([DE1101019Q](#)). In May 2012, the German Metalworkers' Union ([IG Metall](#)) and the Baden-Wuerttemberg Employer Association for the Metal and Electrical Industry ([Südwestmetall](#)) agreed that employers are required to hire trainees on completion of their training ([DE1206019I](#)).

In Malta, the Malta Workers' Union ([UHM](#)), which is Malta's second largest trade union, managed in January 2013 to achieve a national consensus with all social partners and political parties on a policy called [JOBS+](#). [JOBS+](#) is an initiative that seeks to implement a national holistic and perpetual active labour market policy. It is intended to channel resources into the most productive forms of training.

In Finland, social partners recently implemented a project aimed at improving working conditions and well-being at work – they were the Federation of Finnish Technology Industries ([Teknologiäteollisuus](#)), Finnish Metalworkers' Union ([Metallityöväenliitto](#)), Federation of Professional and Managerial Staff ([YTN](#)) and Trade Union Pro ([Ammattiliitto Pro](#)). In particular, the [Hyvä työ - Pidempi työura project](#) involves 50 companies and has developed new practices for enhancing well-being at work. The project offers training to workplaces. Project activity includes seminars, at which companies have the opportunity to network and obtain up-to-date information about well-being at work.

## **Conclusions**

Young European workers (15–29 years old) in general and young entrants to the labour market in particular are enduring a more difficult employment situation compared with other age groups. This is reflected by the much higher unemployment rates (9.2 million young people between 15 and 29 years old were unemployed in the EU27 in 2012) or a higher presence of 'non-standard' forms of employment – such as temporary work, (involuntary) part-time work, temporary agency employment and people working without contracts – usually accepted as the only chance of getting a first job.

However, this general picture hides significant differences between Member States. Some southern and eastern European countries (the Baltic countries, Bulgaria, Portugal, Greece, Italy, Romania, Spain) have a much more difficult labour market situation compared with the Nordic and central European Member States (Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden). This is apparent in the differences in unemployment levels or the very different self-perception of job-security levels

Broadly speaking, young European workers in general and young entrants in particular have:

- more limited levels of autonomy at work, that is, the ability to determine job tasks, work methods and processes, pace at work, working time and so on;
- more irregular working hour patterns, that is, shift work, night work, work during the weekend and so on;
- worse payment conditions – not only salaries but also other additional paid benefits;
- worse access to training opportunities offered by their employers – although they are usually more involved in self-paid training than other age groups;
- a higher risk of being involved in an accident at work – although available evidence also shows that they seem less conscious of risky situations.

Reasons that explain these negative working conditions include:

- the greater presence of fixed-term/temporary contracts among young workers and labour entrants;
- the occupations/economic sectors in which they usually work;
- their cautiousness and lack of bargaining power to negotiate their working conditions;
- their lack of work-based experience and information.

By way of contrast, young European workers in general and young entrants in particular show a high satisfaction with the social aspects of their work, particularly with the contact with and support from colleagues. They also feel less concerned about problems reconciling work with private interests and responsibilities due to a lack of important family compromises (especially among the youngest workers).

There are important differences in working conditions among young workers themselves depending on their personal characteristics (age, educational level, sex, ethnic origin, family background and so on) and occupational characteristics (economic sectors, occupations or type of enterprises where they work). Female, ‘younger’, lower-qualified and non-native young workers employed in small enterprises have to contend with poorer employment and working conditions than their male, ‘older’, higher-qualified and native counterparts employed in large enterprises. This situation is reflected by a more difficult access to the labour market (lower employment and higher unemployment rates), higher exposure to ‘non-standard’ forms of employment (temporary, part-time contracts, temporary agency employment, jobs without contracts and so on), as well as worse working conditions (greater presence of irregular working times, lower autonomy at work, worse remuneration levels).

Some studies also suggest that the family background of young workers may have an influence on the quality of the jobs they access, often regardless of the attained education level. Two main problems can be identified among young workers in terms of education level, especially in the current context of high unemployment levels. On the one hand, the so-called ‘revolving door’ effect is particularly important for the low-skilled group of young people and characterised by higher turnover of young employees in the labour market. On the other hand, the ‘over-qualification’ problem affects those highly qualified young workers whose educational levels are too high for the job they are doing.

The deterioration of a number of European national economies during the economic crisis that began in 2008 has had an especially negative effect on the working and employment conditions of young workers and young entrants. This situation is reflected in lower levels of access to the labour market in terms of decreasing employment rates, increasing unemployment rates and deteriorating perceptions of the labour market situation, and more problems in achieving a standard/good quality job. In addition, the economic crisis has resulted in an increase in irregular working time practices, lower self-perceived autonomy at work, limited access to training and

career advancement opportunities and increased psychological tensions at work due to reduced job security and other factors.

Other elements have experienced a positive trend such as lower incidence levels of accidents at work or less difficulty combining family and work activities (probably explained by lower workload levels). Again, some Member States seem to be particularly affected by this negative evolution – Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Spain, plus other central and eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania and Slovenia. In any case, the available prognosis studies in a number of countries do not envisage an improvement in the situation, at least in the short run, especially as far as the alleviation of high youth unemployment rates is concerned. As a result, several national studies in some of the most affected Member States (Ireland, Portugal, Spain) foresee an increase in migration outflows by young people. Recent initiatives by public authorities primarily address the goals of job creation and the promotion of young people's entry into the labour market. In most cases 'job quality' is not a priority, employment levels being the most important concern. One of the most common types of measures is based on cutting labour costs, as a way of encouraging employers to hire young workers, for example, via refunds of social security contributions or grants to cover salaries. There are also initiatives aimed at countering the lack of work experience; these emphasise the importance of training (for example, specific contracts for young workers) and wide-ranging programmes aimed at making it easier to obtain a first job. In contrast, only a few national initiatives aimed expressly at improving working conditions have been identified (for example, in Denmark, Finland and Norway).

Social partners in many countries have adopted the strategy of close cooperation with governments so as to maintain existing jobs. This demonstrates the serious concern of social partners about the situation of young workers, particularly unemployment rates, but again their working conditions are not the main issue. However, some trade unions have set up special units aimed at improving young people's working conditions and public campaigns have been launched in a number of countries in favour of this issue.

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Antonio Corral and Iñigo Isusi, IKEI

## Annex 1: Country codes

Country code	Country name
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BG	Bulgaria
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal

<b>RO</b>	Romania
<b>SE</b>	Sweden
<b>SI</b>	Slovenia
<b>SK</b>	Slovakia
<b>UK</b>	United Kingdom

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