

GETTING YOUNG WORKERS ON BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS (ESPR)



Research report for ETUC



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KEY MESSAGES

Across the EU, **young people are continuing to face a number of significant challenges to enter and get a stable position in the labour market.**

They do not easily obtain good quality jobs with decent wages and are still faced with significant exclusion from regular employment, good-quality education, training opportunities as well as adequate inclusion and coverage in the national social protection systems.

Young women and migrants are particularly affected. This results in significant challenges for young people to secure a stable foothold in good quality employment.

The precarious and unstable position of young people in employment and social protection **endangers the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights** and its core principles aimed to ensure equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and adequate social protection and inclusion.

Over the years, ETUC has consistently taken action to address the concerns and challenges faced by young workers. It has adopted an official ETUC Strategy for youth, took positions on various EU's actions on youth employment, supported its national members through specific projects and actions and lobbied EU institutions to adopt better youth policies. Currently, ETUC is actively engaged with the European Commission to shape the future of the Youth Guarantee after 2020. A specific project (SPRINT) has been recently concluded to establish the quality standards for traineeships accessed by young people¹.

ETUC has also established a youth-dedicated internal structure - ETUC Youth Committee - which has championed the needs of youth internally within ETUC and towards the national members and European institutions. The current project also demonstrates the ETUC's commitment to address the youth workers through concrete actions and policy initiatives.

ETUC actions for young workers are consistently supporting a better implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its core principles to ensure equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and adequate social protection and inclusion.

ETUC's work on youth is relevant to the effective Pillar implementation also because the young people have been recognized as a special target group in the Pillar and the principle of the Youth Guarantee has been integrated into the Pillar as one of its core principles (Principle 4).

National trade unions have been active to address the challenges and needs of youth in general and young workers in particular. We have identified several examples of **successful collective agreements and other social dialogue activities which have improved working, training and education conditions for youth**. This demonstrates a direct link to a more effective implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights and its relevant core principles to provide young people with equal opportunities and access to the labour market; ensure their fair working conditions; and provide adequate social protection and inclusion.

Successes have also identified internally within the national trade unions to reflect and engage better with young people – including actions to adopt a more strategic approach to youth, develop strong dedicated youth-specific structures internally and take an in-depth look at the actual needs of youth.

¹ <https://www.sprint-erasmusplus.fr/content/o1-research-indicators-and-standards-quality-internships>

However, gaps remain. First of all, there is a low tendency to cover youth issues in binding collective agreements. Having said that, the coverage of youth issues in other softer social dialogue activities is broader, indicating the unions are in general aware of the needs of youth.

At the same time, youth relevant issues and challenges are not systematically embedded and reflected in the collective bargaining processes and outcomes across all national trade unions. Therefore, collective bargaining outcomes do not systematically reflect the alarming situation and multiple challenges of youth faced in the labour market. This is especially alarming in those countries where youth face particularly extensive precarious working, training and education-to-work transition conditions.

Collective agreements and other social dialogue activities also suffer from thematic gaps in missing out to address all the core challenges faced by youth. Issues such as the smaller minimum wage paid to young workers, conversion of temporary and flexible contracts into more permanent employment relationships, access to good-quality training are included in the collective agreements on a sporadic basis.

Internally, several trade unions have taken a strategic approach to address the needs of young people, build and develop strong internal youth-specific actions and undertake profound assessments of the needs of youth. However, these actions are not undertaken systematically across the majority of ETUC affiliates and this gap could be further closed.

Responding to the challenges faced by young workers, the EU has taken a series of legislative, policy and financial initiatives over the last years.

The flagship youth initiative at the EU level has been the Youth Guarantee, introduced in 2012 and updated in 2020. It has been backed up with the funding stream through the European Social Fund. The principle of the Youth Guarantee has also been integrated into the EU Pillar of Social Rights. The EU Pillar of Social Rights and its latest Action Plan reflect also the challenging work and life situations faced by youth, and have several priorities for youth, including adequate social protection, quality education and training and smooth professional transitions.

However, given the scale of challenges faced by the youth in Europe, the policy actions at the EU level and especially the Action Plan need to be further developed. The current funding levels have not been sufficient to reach all those in need. The offers of help made to young people were not always well targeted, did not reflect the labour market conditions and often did not translate into sustainable employment outcomes for young people.

ETUC is providing evidence-based arguments for better designed, holistic and better funded youth-centered policies at the EU and national level.



GLOSSARY

Age discrimination refers to the less favourable treatment of an individual or group due to conditions or requirements relating to age which cannot be shown to be justifiable by a legitimate aim in an objective and reasonable way in the national context.

Apprenticeships are forms of Initial Vocational Education and Training (IVET) that formally combine company-based training (periods of practical work experience at a workplace) with school-based education (periods of theoretical/practical education followed in a school or training centre).

Atypical contracts are generally considered to be contracts other a standard, open-ended and full-time contract. This can encompass many types of contracts, including part-time, fixed-term, temporary, casual and seasonal work.

Collective agreements are the outcomes of collective bargaining which is process of negotiations between the trade unions and employers, usually about the wages, terms and conditions of employment of employees, the rights and responsibilities of trade unions and other topics pertinent to the workers. This can be at sectorial, regional, or company level.

Gig economy is typically considered as an economy where the use of digital technologies enables teams to be assembled around a given project – and often across borders – while platforms seamlessly connect buyers with sellers.

Outreach activities are typically considered to be activities aimed to inform young people, in particular, but not exclusively those who are regarded as 'hard to reach' and those facing multiple barriers, about the support available and steps to take to improve their lives.

Precarious employment is experienced when vulnerable employees have an insecure job and few entitlements to income support.

Social dialogue refers to the discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the social partners – employers and workers organisations.

Traineeships are a limited period of work practice spent at a business, public body or non-profit institution by students or young people having recently completed their education, in order to gain hands-on work experience ahead of taking up regular employment.

Young workers are considered as workers under 35 years of age, or lower, depending on the national context.



01 WHY THIS REPORT?

This is the report summarizing the findings of the research undertaken in the framework of the ETUC project “Getting young workers on board of the European Pillar of Social Rights” 2019-2021.²

With this project, the ETUC aimed to contribute to the improvement of the situation of young Europeans in the labour market by focusing attention on:

- Tackling inequalities which affect young European workers in the labour market and during the transition between the educational system and the labour market. Special attention should be given to the situation of traineeships and therefore how the EU political tools such as the Quality framework for traineeships is further implemented by the ETUC members;
- The situation in the labour market of two categories of workers which are overrepresented in precarious forms of employment, unemployment and inactivity should be particularly addressed: young women on one side and young migrants and second-generation young immigrants (immediate descendants of those born abroad) on the other side. Trade union actions to improve the working conditions of said groups will be defined and implemented;
- Also, in matters of gender, the project will also aim at improving work-life balance for young workers, for which the strengthening of the implementation of the coming EC Initiative to support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers was considered.

The ETUC project has explored the effectiveness of trade union action for young workers at several levels, including:

- Addressing the needs of young workers through collective agreements. The effective conclusions of collective agreements at company and sectoral level have proven to be an effective tool for improving the working conditions of young workers, women and migrants in the labour market and. Provisions on youth employment and transitions included in the collective agreements throughout EU industrial systems were tracked and best practices identified;
- Considering how broader social dialogue activities can respond to the challenges faced by young workers. Bipartite or tripartite negotiations between social partners and (when applicable) Governments to establish policies and legislation to ease the integration in the labour market for the target groups were tracked throughout the EU. Best practices have been selected based on the impact assessment of said initiatives and common denominators were identified;
- Outreach to the most vulnerable youth (including building up alliances with civil society organisations).

The research report is based on the following sources:

- Literature review of the key aspects of youth employment and the relevant trade union action;
- The analysis of the responses of ETUC members to the online survey implemented in the framework of the project in 2019 (see Annex 2 for the full description of the survey approach and methodology);
- The discussions and exchanges at the project workshop in Frankfurt, Germany, in October 2019.

² <https://www.etuc.org/en/issue/european-pillar-social-rights>

The report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 analyses the key challenges faced by young workers in accessing work and in employment across Europe;
- Section 3 provides an overview of ETUC action for young workers to date;
- Section 4 summarises other European policy initiatives aimed to assist young workers, such as the EU's Youth Guarantee and the European Pillar of Social Rights;
- Section 5 provides an analysis of the national trade union actions and activities aimed to address the needs of their young trade unionists and young workers more broadly;
- Section 6 considers actions which could be adopted by trade unions for young people in their structures;
- Section 7 provides research conclusions and policy pointers.

The report is accompanied by the following Annexes:

- Annex 1: Links to key social dialogue activities and collective agreements of the ETUC members aimed at young workers;
- Annex 2: Online survey methodology of ETUC members.



02 WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?



CORE MESSAGES

Across the EU, young people are continuing to face a number of significant challenges to enter and get a stable position in the labour market.

They do not easily obtain good quality jobs with decent wages and are still faced with significant exclusion from regular employment, good-quality education, training opportunities as well as adequate inclusion and coverage in the national social protection systems.

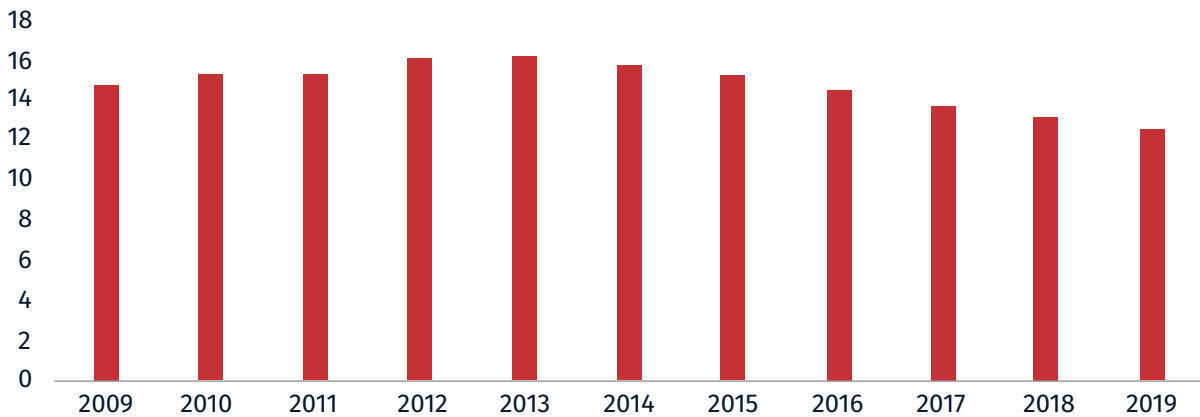
Young women and migrants are particularly affected. This results in significant challenges for young people to secure a stable foothold in good quality employment.

The precarious and unstable position of young people in employment and social protection endangers the full implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its core principles aimed to ensure equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and adequate social protection and inclusion.

2.1 KEY YOUTH CHALLENGES AT WORK AND EDUCATION

Across the EU, around 12% of young people are neither in education, training or employment (2019 data, see Figure 2.1). This phenomenon has remained persistently high over the last 10 years, having declined by only 2 p.p. since 2009. Furthermore, there are significant country differences in the NEET rate across Europe. The rates are particularly high in southern Member States such as Italy, Greece and Romania and Bulgaria. In contrast, countries such as the Netherlands, Iceland or Norway have comparatively low NEET rates, below 5%.

FIGURE 2.1: YOUNG PEOPLE NEITHER IN EDUCATION OR EMPLOYMENT, EU, BY SEX, 2009-2019

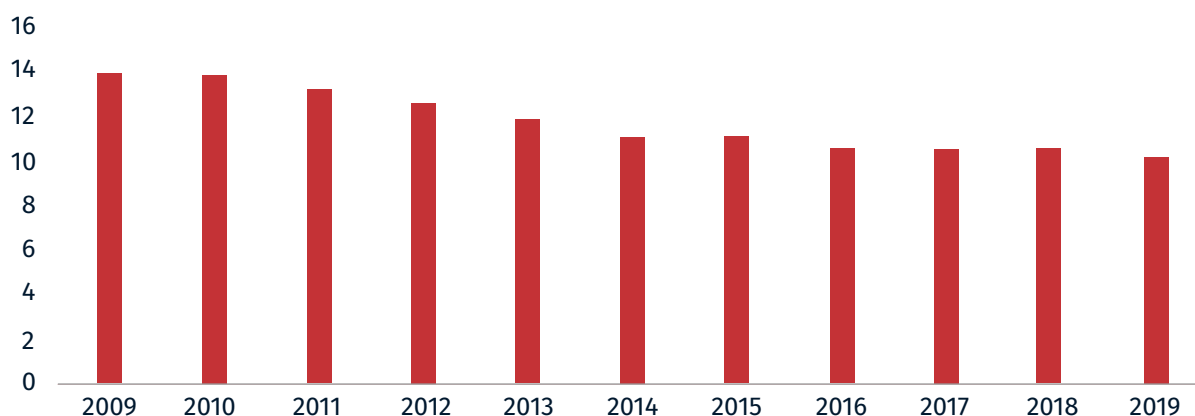


Source: Eurostat, Young people neither in employment nor in education and training by sex, age and educational attainment level (NEET rates) [edat_lfse_21], accessed 12/04/2021.

Too many young people also leave education and training early without formally completing it (see Figure 2.2). At the EU level, for young men and women taken together, this proportion stood at 10% in 2019. It has decreased only slightly over the last years, from 13.8% in 2010, despite a significant policy effort at the European and national levels to address the issue of early school leaving. Also, more young men than women leave education and training early (11.9% of men compared to 8.3% of women).

Early school leaving varies significantly between the European countries. On one hand, in countries like Romania, Malta and Spain early school leaving is very high (above 15% of the young people aged 18-24). In contrast, Croatia, Greece, Lithuania, Slovenia and Poland show very low early school leaving rates (below 5%).

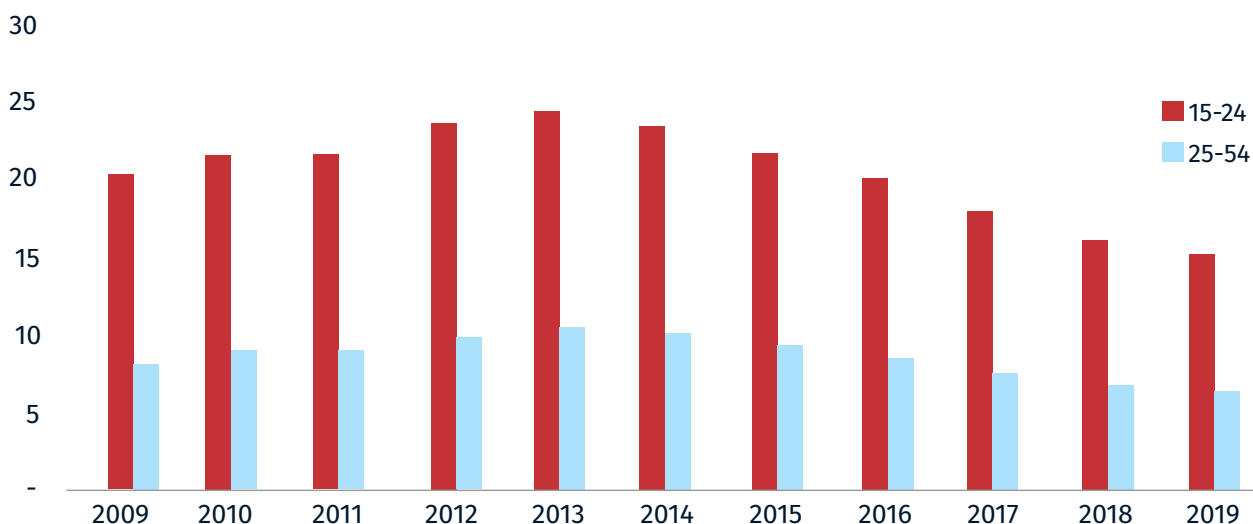
FIGURE 2.2: EARLY LEAVERS FROM EDUCATION AND TRAINING, BY SEX, 2009-2019



Source: Eurostat, Early leavers from education and training, age group 18-24 [TESEM020], accessed 12/04/2021.

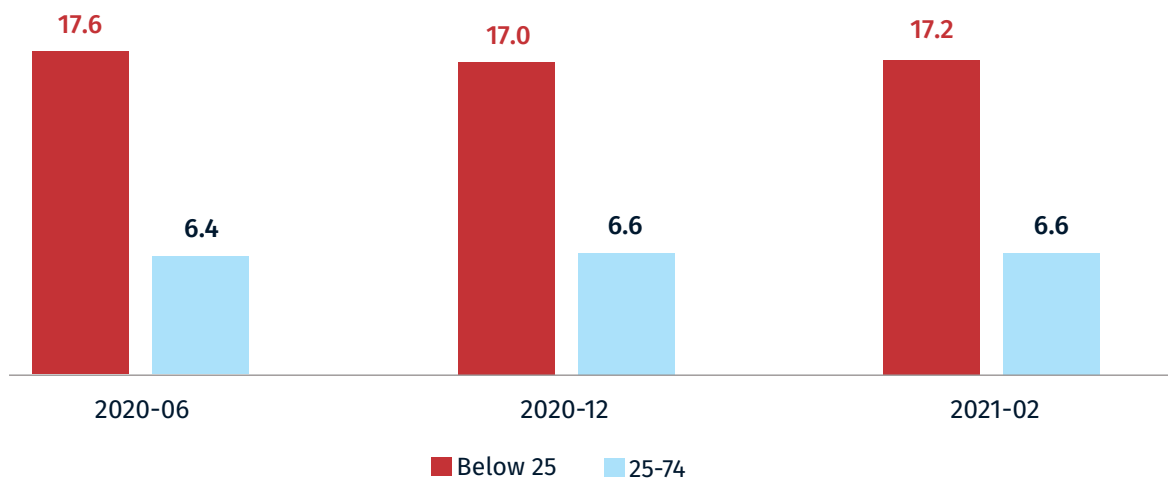
Despite the steady economic recovery across the European Union, youth unemployment rates have also remained high, and above the general unemployment rates (see Figure 2.3). Even in the pre-COVID time of steady economic growth, youth unemployment rates have remained high, and above the general unemployment rates. In 2019, the youth unemployment rate in the EU-27 was 2.5 times higher compared to the adult unemployment rate (15.1% and 6.3% respectively). The youth employment has remained consistently high, steadily twice above the rate of adult unemployment rate, over the last 10 year period, despite a decline from 20% in 2009 to 15.1% in 2019. Importantly, as shown in Figure 2.4, the impact of COVID-19 pandemic crisis has caused the youth unemployment rate to soar again, and data in February 2021 shows it at 17.2%.

FIGURE 2.3: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE EU, 2009-2019



Source: Eurostat, Unemployment rate by age [TEPSR_WC170], accessed 12/04/2021.

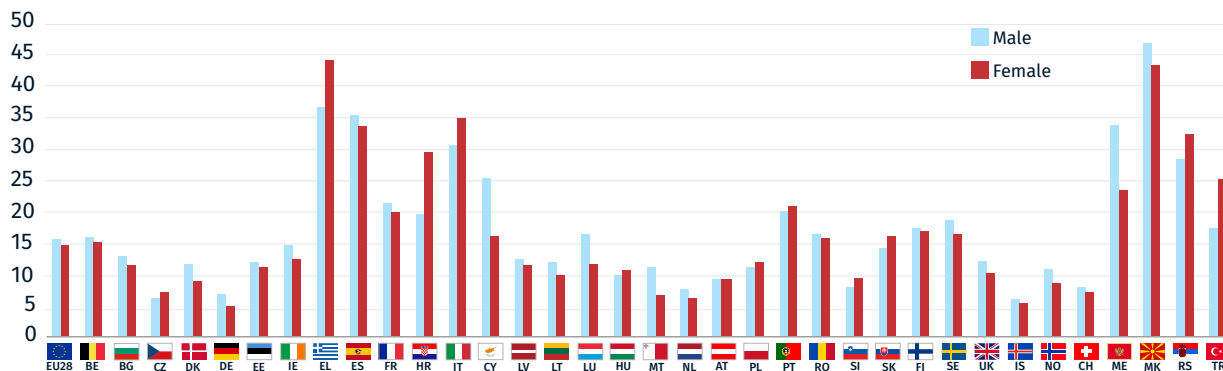
FIGURE 2.4: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT AND ADULT UNEMPLOYMENT IN THE EU, SELECTED MONTHS IN 2020-2021



Source: Eurostat, Unemployment by sex and age – monthly data [UNE_RT_M__custom_802454], accessed 12/04/2021.

In general, looking at the EU average, more young men tend to be unemployed compared to the young women (15.8% and 14.6% respectively, see Figure 2.5). However, in several countries the situation is reverse, such as Italy, Greece and Spain, where youth unemployment rates are already very high. Over the last ten years, the female youth unemployment rate in the EU-28 has declined by 22% from 18.8% in 2009 to 14.2% in 2018. However, in Italy and Greece it has risen further from already high levels.

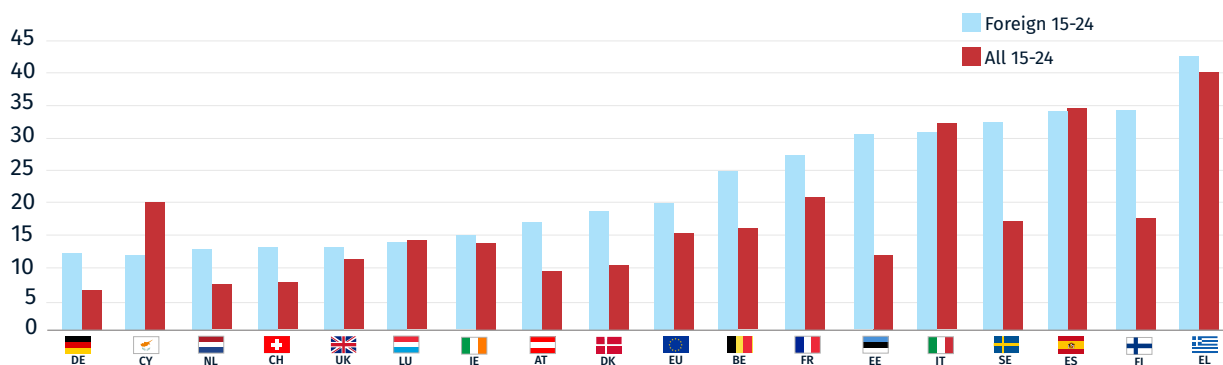
FIGURE 2.5: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE OF MEN AND WOMEN, 2019



Source: Eurostat, Unemployment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%) [lfsa_organ], accessed 12/04/2021.

Migrant young people are also facing difficulties in the labour market (see Figure 2.6). Across the EU, the unemployment rate of foreigners aged 15-24 was 19.8% in 2018, compared to 15.2% rate of all youth aged 15-24. The difference was particularly high in northern Member States, Sweden, Finland and Estonia. Although the difference was smaller in southern Member States, foreign youth face very high unemployment rates in Spain, Italy and Greece (around 30%).

FIGURE 2.6: YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE: FOREIGNERS AND ALL YOUTH, 2018

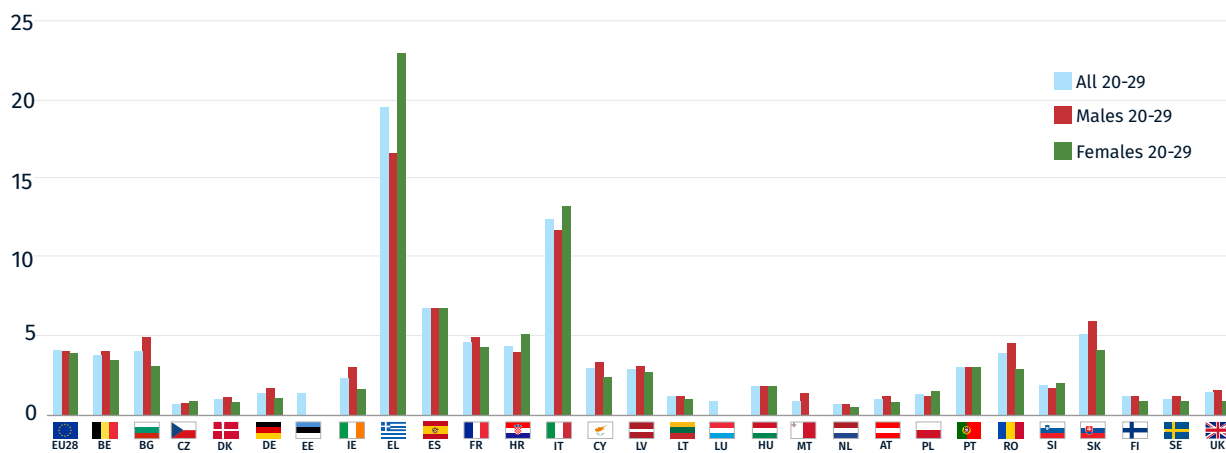


Source: Eurostat, Unemployment rates by sex, age and citizenship (%) [lfsa_urgan], accessed 06/01/2020. No data for remaining countries.

Furthermore, a large proportion of young people stay unemployed in the long term, for 12 months or less (see Figure 2.7). This has a significant personal financial and psychological cost and a loss of human capital, employability and future prospects at the labour market. At the EU level, over 4% of young unemployed people aged 20-29 remained unemployed for 12 months or longer. This proportion has declined only slightly from 5.5% in 2010, despite high political attention and a range of measures adopted to combat youth unemployment (see section 4). Long-term unemployment affects equally young women and men.

The EU average masks significant country differences and dramatic situations in some countries. Indeed, in Greece and Italy, long-term youth unemployment rate is almost 3 to 4 times higher than the EU average. In contrast, below 1% young unemployed stay so in the long term in the Netherlands, Czechia or Malta.

FIGURE 2.7: LONG-TERM YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT RATE, YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 20-29, BY SEX, 2018



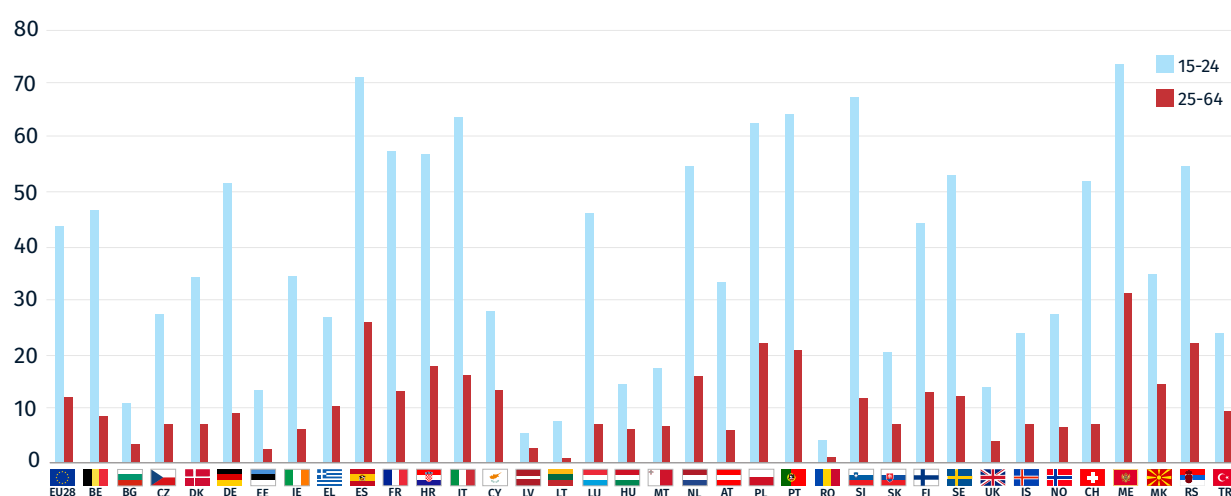
Source: Eurostat, Youth long-term unemployment rate (12 months or longer) by sex and age [yth_empl_120], accessed 12/03/2020.

Importantly, recent research from Eurofound on long term unemployment among young people has shown its a scarring effect on a young person's lifelong economic outcomes (Eurofound 2018). Young people who experienced long-term unemployment are more likely to suffer permanent damage to their earning prospects, resulting in a sizeable income penalty over the course of their lives. Long-term unemployment also dramatically affects several dimensions of young people's well-being. In particular, it decreases their overall life satisfaction and, most importantly, increases the risk of social exclusion and mental health problems. Young people who have experienced long-term unemployment are also more likely to be materially deprived compared with others in the same age group, including the short-term unemployed.

When young people do manage to enter the labour market, they are disproportionately affected by precarious working conditions. For example, in 2018 over 40% of young workers in the EU had temporary work contracts, compared to 12% of adult workers with such contracts (see Figure 8). This was particularly high in Spain, Italy, France and Croatia.

In 2020, the situation got even worse, with as much as 46.5% of the young workers aged 15-24 in the EU having temporary work contracts (only slightly down from 46.8% in 2009). For comparison in 2020, just below 12% of adult workers aged 25-54 (11.8% in 2009) and 6.1% (7.2% in 2009) of those aged 55 to 64 were employed under a temporary contract (Eurostat, Temporary employees as percentage of the total number of employees, by sex, age and citizenship (%) [lfsa_etpgan]). The share of young workers aged 15-24 with a temporary contract in 2020 was particularly high in Spain (66.4%), Italy (58.9%), Portugal (56%), Slovenia (55.9), France (55.8%), Poland (54.7%), Sweden (53.8%) and the Netherlands (50.3%).

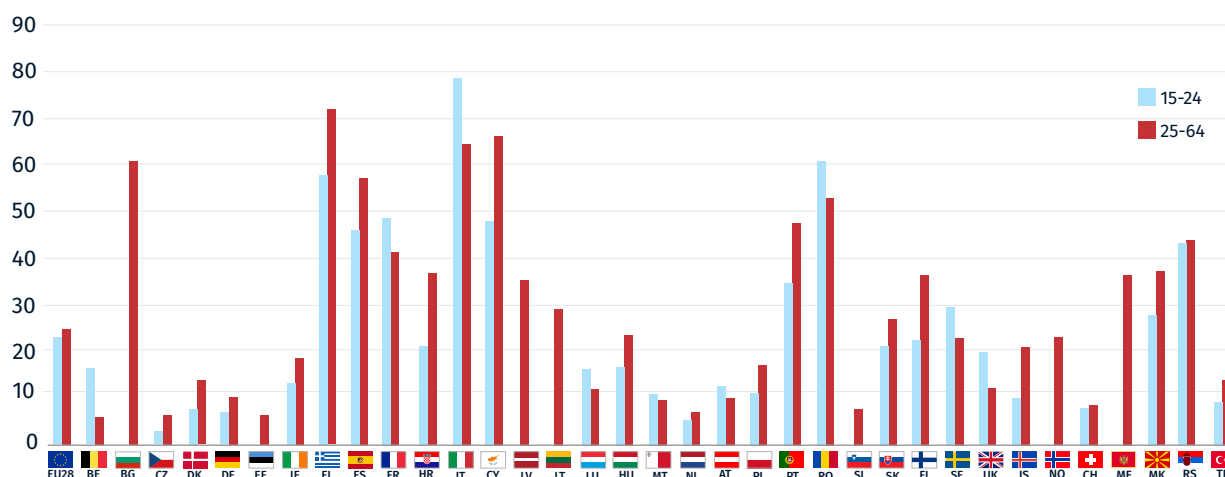
FIGURE 2.8: TEMPORARY WORKERS: YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS, 2018



Source: Eurostat, Temporary employees as percentage of the total number of employees, by sex, age and citizenship (%) [lfsa_etpgan], accessed 06/01/2020.

A significant proportion of young people were also working part-time although they did not wish so (see Figure 9, showing the phenomenon of so-called involuntary part-time employment). Across the EU, in 2018, over 20% of all young workers were affected by involuntary part-time employment, with particularly high rates in Italy, Spain, Greece and France. The situation remained unchanged in 2020. Across the EU, in 2020, over 25% (as compared to 32% in 2009) of all young workers aged 15-29 were affected by involuntary part-time employment, with particularly high rates in Italy (78.3%), Romania (65.1%), Greece (62.5%), Cyprus (59.7%) and Spain (51.6%).

FIGURE 2.9: INVOLUNTARY PART-TIME EMPLOYMENT: YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS, 2018



Source: Eurostat, Involuntary part-time employment as percentage of the total part-time employment, by sex and age (%) [lfsa_eppgai], accessed 06/01/2020.

This high extent of young people working part-time not by choice is confirmed by the analysis of the main reasons why young people are working part-time (see Table 2.1). Nearly a quarter of young people aged 15-24 worked part-time because they could not find a full-time job. This rises to nearly 40% of young people aged 25-29, when they can be expected to have completed their initial education phase. In the age group 25-29, not being able to find a full-time job is also the main reason for young people to work part-time, even though they wish so. Significantly, this proportion declined only slightly in the last years, from 39.2% in 2010.

In 2020, the share of young people aged 15-24 who worked part-time because they could not find a full-time job declined slightly from 27.6% in 2009 to 21.5% in 2020. This rises to 32% (compared to 38.4% in 2009) of young people aged 25-29, when they can be expected to have completed their initial education phase. In the age group 25-29, not being able to find a full-time job is also the main reason for young people to work part-time, even though they wish so.

TABLE 2.1: MAIN REASONS AMONGST YOUNG PEOPLE FOR WORKING PART-TIME, EU, 2018

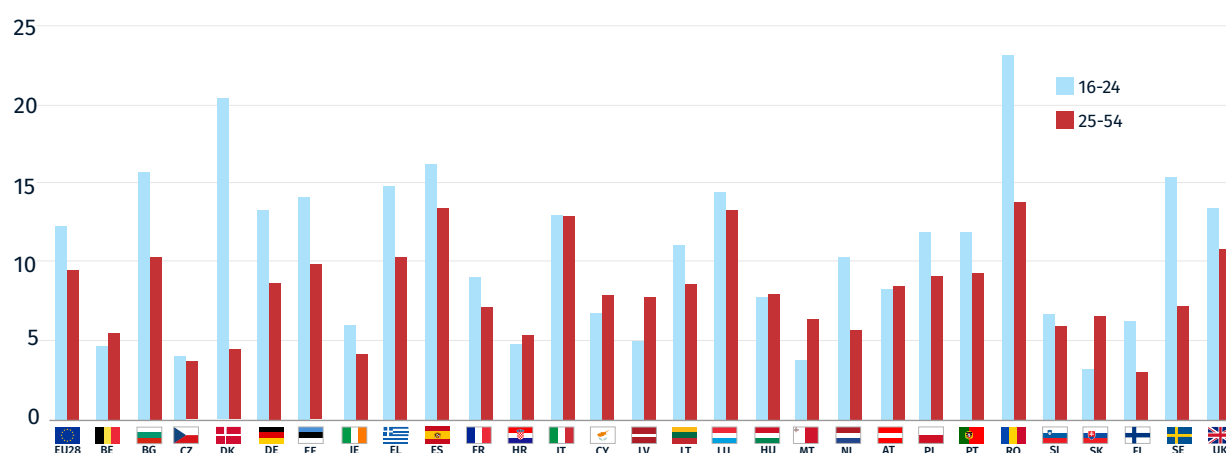
REASONS:
Could not find a full-time job
Own illness or disability
Other family or personal responsibilities
Looking after children or incapacitated adults
In education or training
Other

Source: Eurostat, Main reasons for part-time employment of young people by sex and age [yth_empl_070], accessed 12/03/2020.

2.2 KEY CHALLENGES OF HIGH POVERTY AND LOW SOCIAL PROTECTION

Even when in work, young people are more likely to experience poverty and material deprivation whilst working (see Figure 10). At the EU level, 12.3% of young people in employment were experiencing poverty although they were working, which is nearly 3 p.p. higher compared to 9.5% of working adults experiencing poverty although working. Since 2010, the proportion of young people experiencing in-work poverty has risen by over 100%, from 11.1% in 2010 to 12.3% in 2018. The situation at the national level is very diverse. The extent of in-work poverty amongst young people is particularly high, compared to the working adults in their country, in Denmark, Sweden, Greece, Spain, the UK, Romania and Bulgaria.

FIGURE 2.10: IN WORK POVERTY RATE, YOUNG PEOPLE AND ADULTS, 2018



Source: Eurostat, In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by age and sex - EU-SILC survey [ilc_iw01], accessed 11/03/2020.

Young people also face challenges in accessing the adequate social protection systems as they tend to be not adequately covered in the existing social security safety nets and thus more likely to “fall through the cracks”. This is often due to the access to social security being based on the employment status, including often regular employment. As shown above, young people face significant challenges in accessing such employment. Young people, often overrepresented in these non-standard forms of employment, may be formally covered or have the legal possibility to opt for access to social security benefits. However, often this does not translate into actual social security access in the sense of being able in practice of working to build and take up adequate entitlements to social security benefits and services. This is because it may be difficult for young people to meet the benefit entitlement criteria of employment hours/duration, income level, contribution periods etc. or because they may be disadvantaged by the existing rules of benefit calculation (European Commission 2017).

Based on this analysis of access to social security benefits by the European Commission, a number of situations of the potential and actual lack of coverage of young people in the social security systems can be identified. It reflects the key types of social security relevant to the situation of typical young persons, such as the need for healthcare, getting sick, becoming unemployed or having a child. This shows that often certain categories of workers, typically widespread amongst the young people, such as freelancers, casual or seasonal workers, have no access to certain benefits. Another challenge relates to the eligibility conditions often relating to the requirement of having worked for a certain time period or having reached a particular income threshold. Again, this often puts young workers at a disadvantage and precarious situations in accessing social security benefits.

It reflects the key types of social security relevant to the situation of typical young persons, such as the need for healthcare, getting sick, becoming unemployed or having a child. This shows that often certain categories of workers, typically widespread amongst the young people, such as freelancers, casual or seasonal workers, have no access to certain benefits.

In particular, in a number of countries young people de facto have limited access to the unemployment benefits. For example, in Austria, marginal part-timers have no access to the unemployment benefit, in Hungary and Sweden employees on non-standard contracts have no such access, and in Latvia and Romania this relates to seasonal workers. As shown in section 1, young people are significantly overrepresented amongst part-time, non standard and seasonal work, thus denying them the opportunity to benefit from the access to the unemployment benefit.

Similar challenges for young people to access the sickness benefit are noted in several countries. For example, casual and seasonal workers in Hungary and Lithuania do not have access to the sickness benefit, in Portugal this is the case for workers on temporary contracts and in Slovakia for persons with irregular income.

Another challenge relates to the eligibility conditions often relating to the requirement of having worked for a certain time period or having reached a particular income threshold. For example, in relation to access to the sickness benefit, a number of countries have a threshold of having been in employment for a certain period of time, which disadvantages labour market entrants such as young people. This is the case for example in Belgium, Bulgaria, France or Italy. Again, this often puts young workers at a disadvantage and in very precarious personal and societal situations in accessing the social security benefits.

Another aspect relevant in considering the situation of young people is also **their lower access to the regular minimum wage**. According to Eurofound's *Minimum wages in 2020: Annual review*, in six EU Member States, the national minimum wage has been lower for young people, compared to adults. This was the case for example in the following countries:

- In Belgium, lower rates are applied to younger workers;
- In Ireland, a special lower rate of minimum wage is applicable to young (under 20) workers;
- In France, sub-national minimum wage applies to workers aged under 18, apprentices and workers below 18 with less than 6 months of work experience;
- In Germany, since 1 January 2020, apprentices in their first year receive 33% of the statutory minimum wage, which will increase by 18% and 35% in the second and third year of the apprenticeship, respectively;
- In Luxembourg, the minimum wage for under 18s is 20% lower than the full amount, and a 25% reduction is applied to young people between 15 and 17 years old. In return, a 20% surplus has to be paid to qualified employees;
- In the Netherlands, in 2019, the sub-minimum wage rates were raised for younger workers aged 18-20 and the full minimum wage rate became applicable for employees aged 21.

This is also confirmed in the national minimum wage information compiled by Eurostat.³ As of 1 January 2021, a number of countries maintained lower national minimum wages for younger workers. As shown in Table below, 9 EU countries maintained rules which allowed lower national minimum wage rates to be applied for young people on the basis of their age, being in vocational training, in the first period of employment.

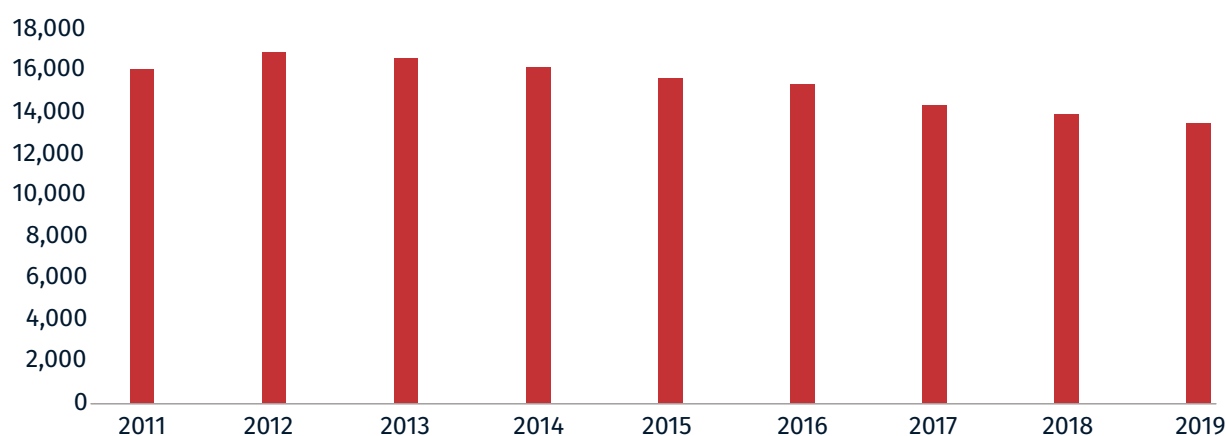
³ https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/cache/metadata/Annexes/earn_minw_esms_an1.pdf

TABLE 2.2: LOWER NATIONAL MINIMUM WAGES FOR YOUNG WORKERS, EU, 2021

MS	MINIMUM WAGE FOR YOUNG WORKERS
Belgium	Lower rates are applied to younger workers.
Germany	Young people aged under 18 who have not completed any vocational training, and apprentices are exempted from minimum wage regulations. Since 1 January 2020, apprentices in their first year shall receive 33% of the statutory minimum wage, which will increase by 18% and 35% in the second and third year of the apprenticeship, respectively.
Ireland	Sub-minimum wage rates apply where an employee is under age 20 or undergoing a prescribed course of study or training.
France	Lower rates can be applied to apprentices, workers below 18 with less than 6 months of work experience.
Latvia	Special hourly rates exist for employees aged under 18.
Luxembourg	Different rates apply as follows: 80% of the national minimum wage is due to a worker aged 17-18 years, 75% to a worker aged 15-17 years.
Malta	Lower rates apply to workers younger than 17 years and to those aged 17-18.
Netherlands	Lower rates apply to employees aged 15-20. As of July 2019, workers aged 21 are eligible to 100% of the full adult rate (previously 85%). ⁴
Portugal	Apprentices and stagiaires can have a reduction up to 20%, for a period that cannot exceed 1 year.

Source: Eurostat, 2021.

Due to challenging access to the labour market, high extent of precarious working conditions and issues in obtaining social security coverage, the number of young people at risk of poverty and social exclusion remains high (see Figure 2.11). In 2018, across the EU, over 22 million young people were at risk of poverty and social exclusion. This has declined only slightly from 23.7 million such young people facing poverty and social exclusion 10 years ago, in 2009.

FIGURE 2.11: YOUNG PEOPLE AT RISK OF POVERTY AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION, AGED 16-29, EU-27, 2009-2019, THOUSANDS OF PERSONS

Source: Eurostat, People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex [ilc_peps01], accessed 11/04/2021.

⁴ Eurofound, *Minimum wages in 2020: Annual review*, p. 18

Another area of challenges facing young people is the risk of poor mental health, bullying and other psycho-social challenges (Eurofound 2019). Mental well-being challenges affect many young people in Europe. 14% of Europeans aged 18–24 were at risk of depression. Young people in Sweden were most at risk of depression, followed by those in Estonia, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. The proportion of young people who are chronically depressed is lower. Data for 2014 show that 4% of Europeans aged 15–24 were chronically depressed. The highest rates were in Ireland (12%), followed by Finland (11%), Sweden (10%) and Germany (9%).

Socioeconomic status has a strong impact on whether young people are at risk of depression. Those living in households in the lowest income quartile are more likely to be at risk. There is also a strong gender dimension to issues of mental health, with young women (15–24 years) being more prone to depression.

Given that issues around health and mental well-being are affecting young people, access to relevant services is key to addressing their needs. Yet a significant proportion of young people have difficulties in accessing services. Regarding health care, the most important access issues are delays in getting an appointment and long waiting times on the day.

There are considerable inequalities among young people in Europe in terms of accessing healthcare (Eurofound 2019). Across Europe, for example, cost is a problem for nearly three-quarters of those aged 18–24 in Cyprus. In Austria, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Latvia and the UK, deterioration was reported on most dimensions of access between 2011 and 2016, while in Italy and Slovakia some improvements can be seen. Overall, in the EU, young people with disability or chronic illness are more likely to report difficulties in accessing healthcare – especially in terms of delays, waiting time and finding time to get to the doctor.

2.3 VOICES OF YOUNG WORKERS

These challenges faced by young workers and young people more generally are well reflected in the representative public opinion polls. In the 2018 Future of Europe Eurobarometer study⁵, the priorities for young people aged 15–24 are very distinct from those faced by older population. Their top three ideas for the future of Europe were:

- Fair and equal access to education for all across the European Union (42%);
- gender equality established everywhere in the European Union; and
- equal wages for the same job across the European Union (both 36%).

The general public had quite different views. For them, the three most mentioned areas across all respondents for the ideal future for the EU are equal wages for the same job across the European Union (38%), a minimum level of guaranteed healthcare in all countries of the European Union and a high level of security within the European Union (both 32%).

A special representative Eurobarometer survey in 2019 on the attitudes of young people was conducted.⁶ Between 18th and 28th March 2019, 10,786 respondents aged 15 to 30 from different social and demographic groups in 28 EU countries were interviewed.

The five most mentioned priorities for the European Union in years to come according to young people interviewed were reflecting the importance of good education and employment pathways:

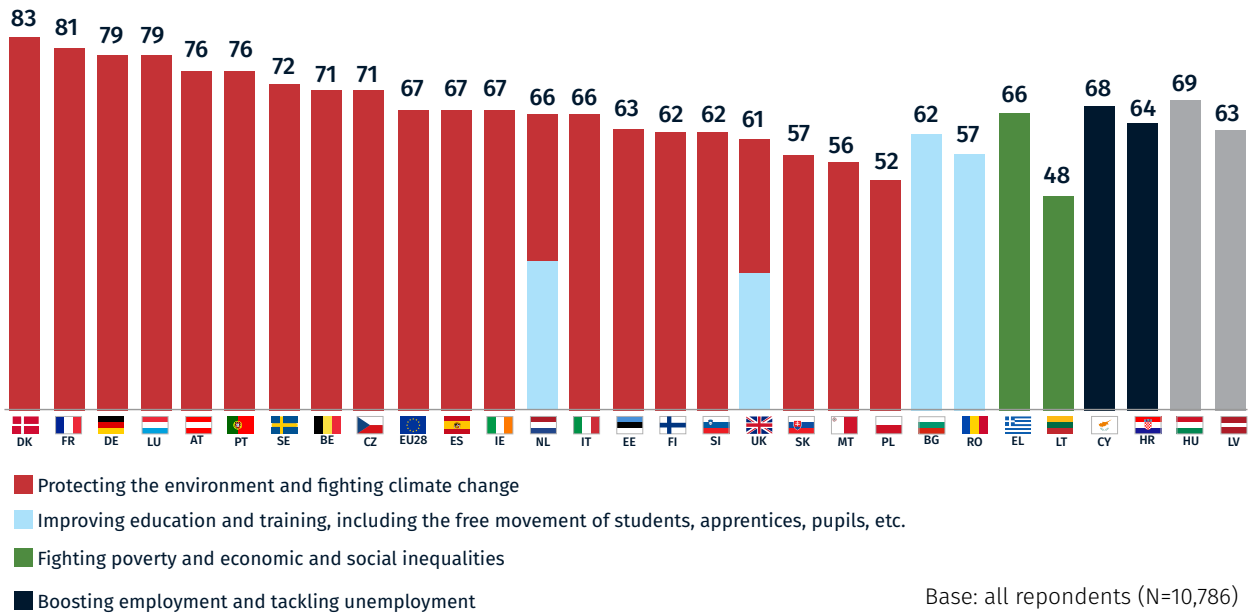
- protecting the environment and fighting climate change (mentioned by 67%),
- improving education and training (56%),
- Fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities (56%), boosting employment (49%) and improving health and well-being (44%).

In 18 countries, young respondents most often say protecting the environment and fighting climate change should be a priority for the EU in years to come (see Figure 2.12). In the Netherlands and the United Kingdom this topic is equally mentioned alongside improving education and training. Improving education and training, fighting poverty and economic and social inequalities, boosting employment and tackling unemployment and improving health and well-being are the most mentioned topic in two countries.

⁵ <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/special/surveyky/2217>

⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/commfrontoffice/publicopinion/index.cfm/survey/getsurveydetail/instruments/flash/surveyky/2224>

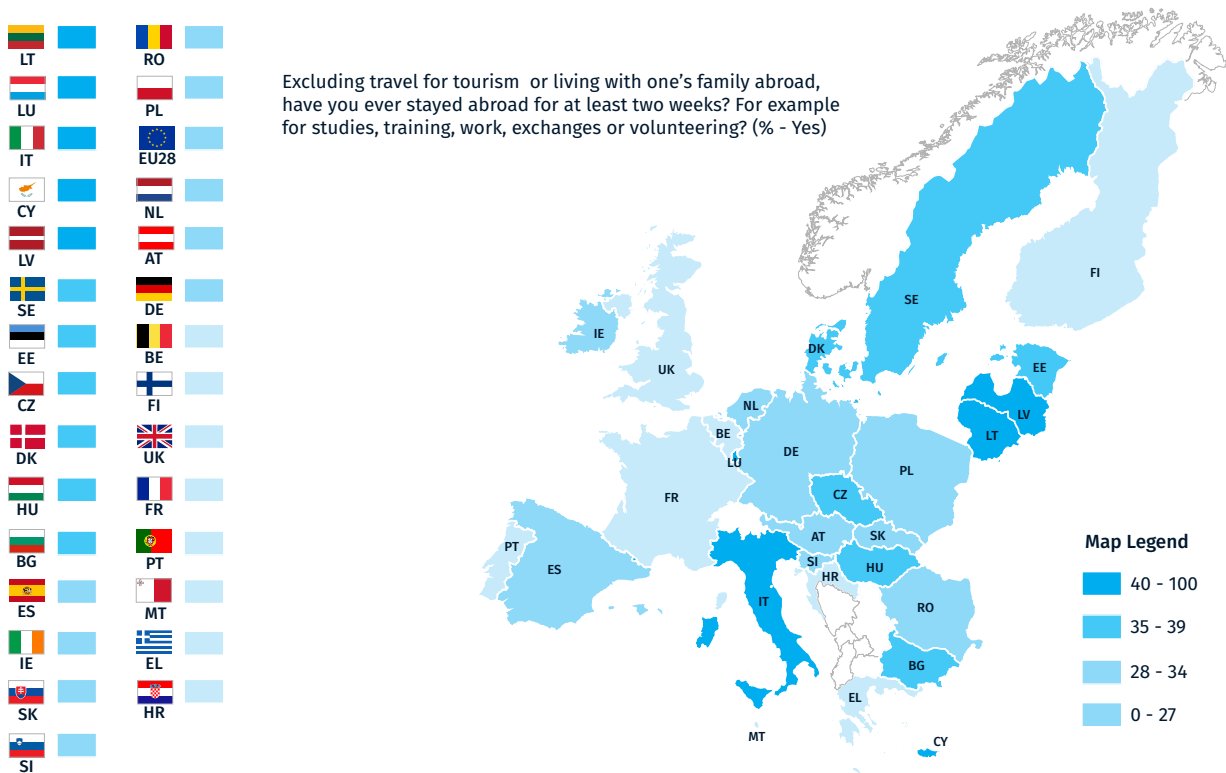
FIGURE 2.12: THE MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITIES FOR YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EU, 2019



Source: Eurobarometer 2019, No. 478.

Important findings were also identified in relation to young people undergoing learning experiences abroad, often prevented by the lack of financial means (see Figure 2.13). Almost one third of young respondents across the EU have spent at least two weeks abroad for learning experiences. Participation in learning experiences abroad varies considerably across countries. Luxembourg is the only country where at least half (51%) have been abroad for at least two weeks for studies, training, work, exchanges or volunteering, followed by 42% in Lithuania and 41% in Italy. At the other end of the spectrum only 18% of young people in Croatia, 20% in Greece and also 18% in Malta have done the same. The figure shows that there are no clear-cut trends when it comes to regions of the EU (West-East-North-South).

FIGURE 2.13: YOUNG PEOPLE HAVING A LEARNING EXPERIENCE ABROAD, 2019



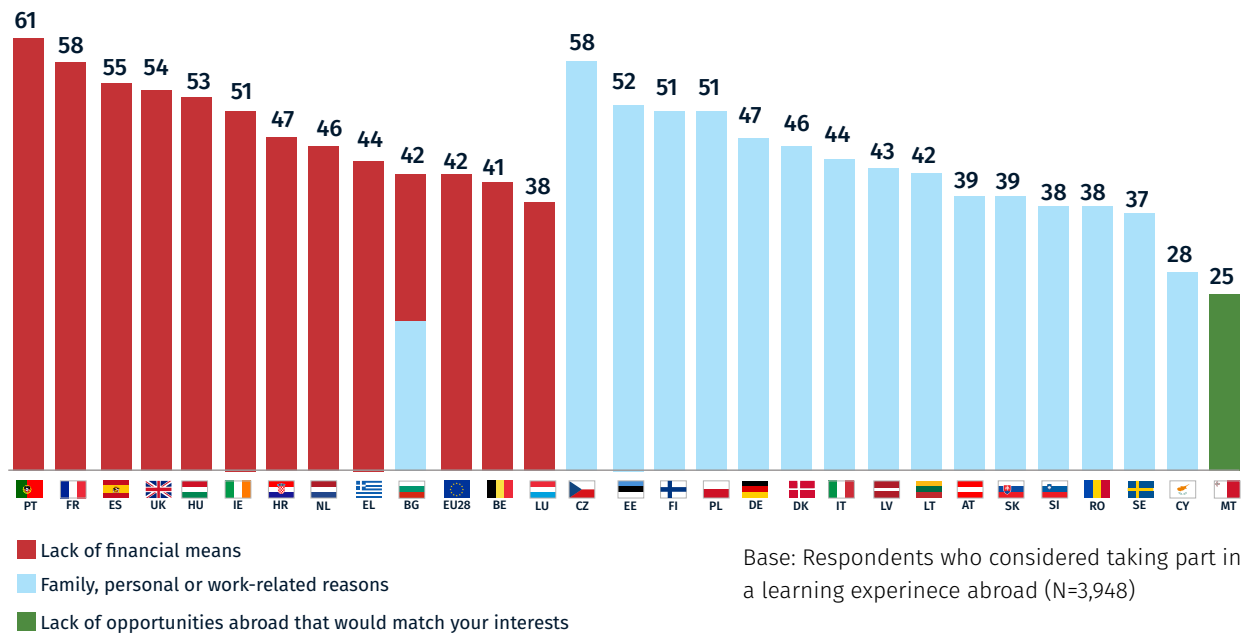
Source: Eurobarometer 2019, No. 478.

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)

Of those who did not stay abroad more than half considered such an experience. The main reasons why they did not take part are lack of financial means and family, personal or work-related factors (see Figure 14). Amongst respondents who have not stayed abroad for learning experiences but have considered doing so, lack of financial means (42%) is the main reason for not doing so, closely followed by family, personal or work-related reasons (41%).

In 11 countries, the most common reason given for not participating in learning activities abroad is the lack of financial means, while in 15 countries family, personal or work-related reasons are the most mentioned. In Bulgaria these two reasons are mentioned by the same proportion (42%). Malta is the only country where a lack of opportunities abroad that would match their interests is the most mentioned reason for not participating.

FIGURE 2.14: MAIN REASONS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE NOT HAVING A LEARNING EXPERIENCE ABROAD, 2019



Source: Eurobarometer 2019, No. 478.



03

WHAT IS ETUC DOING FOR YOUTH?



CORE MESSAGES

Over the years, ETUC has consistently taken action to address the concerns and challenges faced by young workers. It has adopted an official ETUC Strategy for youth, took positions on various EU's actions on youth employment, supported its national members through specific projects and actions and lobbied EU institutions to adopt better youth policies. Currently, ETUC is actively engaged with the European Commission to shape the future of the Youth Guarantee after 2020. A specific project (SPRINT) has been recently concluded to establish the quality standards for traineeships accessed by young people.⁷

ETUC has also established a youth-dedicated internal structure ETUC Youth Committee which has championed the needs of youth internally within ETUC and towards the national members and European institutions. The current project also demonstrates the ETUC's commitment to address the youth workers through concrete actions and policy initiatives.

ETUC actions for young workers are consistently supporting a better implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its core principles to ensure equal opportunities and access to the labour market; fair working conditions; and adequate social protection and inclusion.

ETUC's work on youth is relevant to the effective Pillar implementation also because the young people have been recognized as a special target group in the Pillar and the principle of the Youth Guarantee has been integrated into the Pillar as one of its core principles (Principle 4).

Most recently in 2019, ETUC has adopted **ETUC's Youth overarching political document "The Future of Youth"**⁸ setting out its current understanding of issues faced by young workers and the representation of the interests of young workers in the trade unions. The document identifies a number of themes for the ETUC to take action on:

- Reflect how the digitization will offer benefits and pose risks to young workers, and ensure that young people have an inclusive transition towards good and fair digital work based on good working conditions, a safe and secure working environment and a fair employment relationship with their employer;
- Support better transitions, with identifying more effective measures at European and national level which aim to combat youth unemployment through further education, quality apprenticeships and traineeships and job opportunities. In this context, the action on Youth Guarantee must be strengthened to reach the young people most in need of support, in an early intervention principle contained in the Youth Guarantee;
- Promoting a quality entry to the labour market for young workers with working time that gives rights on pension entitlements, apprenticeships and internships, as well as to defending pension systems based on intergenerational solidarity;
- Proposing a Youth Autonomy Allowance (YAA). It is an allowance that you will receive monthly from the year you turn 18 until you are 25, the only other condition being that you sign up for an education or job-seeking programme;

⁷ <https://www.sprint-erasmusplus.fr/content/o1-research-indicators-and-standards-quality-internships>

⁸ <https://www.etuc.org/en/circular/etuc-youth-overarching-political-document-future-youth>

- Refreshing the trade unions with young members and activists: recruiting more young people into unions, based on the overall strategic thinking on union activity and future prospects. Unions have to move out of their offices and go to the places where young people study and work – such as malls, restaurants, co-working spaces, and hubs – or look for a job, as well as participating in events where they can get in contact with many young people, such as concerts, festivals;
- Change the focus of collective bargaining processes to reflect the needs of workers in non-standard jobs. As more and more workers are employed in precarious forms of employment, forced into self-employment or working for a platform in the gig economy, trade unions should also expand and include these workers, who often don't even have employee status in their collective bargaining negotiation, and also when preparing or negotiating legislative changes that affect them.

The previous **ETUC's strategic paper on youth, European Youth Employment Policy Paper in 2015**, identified how the austerity measures implemented at the national levels have had a disproportionately negative impact on the working and living conditions of young people in Europe. There was a dramatic rise in youth unemployment rates, in some countries resulting in more young people without a job than employed. Many reforms which de-regulate the working conditions of young people were boosted after the crisis. These measures aimed at making young workers “more attractive” to employers by decreasing their wage and social security costs, which have propelled precariousness in youth employment as well as downward convergence for the total workforce and the risk of substitution and social dumping.

At a more operational level, ETUC has also implemented several activities and projects aimed to address the needs of young workers.

In 2017-2018, a project **“Boosting unions’ participation to guarantee quality transitions and employment to young people in Europe”** was implemented.⁹ The project provides a pool of systematic knowledge on what is happening at European and national levels in implementation of EU youth employment policies, with a focus on trade union involvement; provision of comparable cross-national information on existing practices of trade union involvement in EU youth employment policies; creation of a practical toolbox (recommendations) on trade union involvement in youth employment policies. The practices included are relevant and transferable to various national and regional contexts as well as rely on evidence regarding their value and impact; sharing of good practices, and mutual learning.

Since 2017, ETUC has also been involved in **SPRINT project¹⁰ “Standardize best PRactices about INTernships”**. This is a three-year project which started on September 1st, 2017. It is a strategic partnership project co-funded by the Erasmus+ programme that aims to improve young people’s integration into the labor market by creating a common criteria for quality for internships in Europe. The project aims to create a unique common standard for traineeships in Europe, using criteria commonly accepted by employers. The criteria relate to high standards in recruiting trainees, providing a written agreement, adequate remuneration, appropriate skills acquisition processes, tutoring, career development and mentoring support, good quality working conditions and working environment and a high standard of social security and social protection.

ETUC has also been actively monitoring the implementation of the EU’s Youth Guarantee (see section 4.1).¹¹ It undertook several analyses and studies and assessed progress since the Youth Guarantee was launched in 2013.

ETUC has consistently called for higher investment into the Youth Guarantee schemes and more commitment from employers and national governments. ETUC has showed that the EU’s Youth Guarantee has not done enough to help young people into work in Europe. Youth Guarantee resulted in too many young people in precarious and low-paid jobs or internships with little prospect of career development. Also, despite their willingness to take part in the initiative, trade unions have not been properly involved in designing, implementing and monitoring the Youth Guarantee, even though such partnership is known to be key to the scheme’s success. Overall, ETUC noted that the proportion of young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) has hardly moved. Young women and vulnerable groups like migrants and refugees need individual, tailored support.

⁹ <https://www.etuc.org/en/publication/boosting-unions-participation-guarantee-quality-transitions-and-employment-young-people>

¹⁰ <https://www.sprint-erasmusplus.fr/content/o1-research-indicators-and-standards-quality-internships>

¹¹ <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/etuc-research-shows-eu-must-do-more-tackle-youth-unemployment>

Most recently, in the hearing of social partners organized by the European Commission on Youth Guarantee in March 2020, ETUC also raised substantial concerns about the viable future of Youth Guarantee. ETUC highlighted the concerns echoed also by other stakeholders, such as the low quality of the YG offers provided, the challenges to provide a timely offer within the 4 months established by the Council recommendations and the poor outreach strategies to offer the Youth Guarantee to those young people who are furthest from the labour market (NEETs). ETUC has called for having quality criteria as a requirement of all offers under Youth Guarantee. Furthermore, a participatory control mechanism should be part of the new Youth Guarantee, with strong involvement of social partners during the setting of the criteria and the implementation of the control mechanism.

ETUC's response to reinforced Youth Guarantee (see Section 4) has been summed up a call for "It's time for quality jobs".¹² In this context, ETUC has adopted a resolution calling to acknowledge the major shortcomings in the implementation of the Youth Guarantee. ETUC has called the EU to act on these and correct them by introducing a binding quality criteria framework jointly designed and implemented by the social partners for all offers under the Youth Guarantee scheme. ETUC has strongly called for action, backed up by EU and national funds, to prevent the Youth Guarantee contributing to social dumping, wage dumping and precariousness of young people in the labour markets. Instead, ETUC has pointed out that Youth Guarantee offers must ensure the appropriate social protection for young people, to avoid increasing their risk of poverty and precarious work. Also, it should ensure a better involvement of social partners on European, National, Sectoral and company level in the design, implementation, control and monitoring of the Youth Guarantee schemes. As the offers of Youth Guarantee are funded by public budgets, the quality criteria must be binding for all providers. ETUC has called for Youth Guarantee having specific binding conditions for employers in this context, such as having a written agreement, decent wages and working conditions, limits to weekly working hours, minimum weekly rest and holiday pay, as well as access to social protection and social insurance. In this binding way, the quality control of offers will be ensured, also preventing young people from getting stuck in the cycle of training and internships without getting a firm hold in the labour markets. ETUC has pointed out that in some Member States more than 60% of Youth Guarantee offers consist of traineeships.

ETUC's campaign on the need for a pay rise in 2017 also highlighted a number of core issues affecting the unequal wages of young people across Europe.¹⁴ Core themes highlighted in the campaign related to the following aspects:

- Traineeships are supposed to ease the path from education to work, and should have a strong training or learning element. In reality, they are often used to supply cheap, or even unpaid, labour. Some 61% of university graduates across Europe have undertaken at least one traineeship. Some do provide useful training, and some are combined with study. However, only 20% pay enough to cover basic living costs, sinking to 12% in Spain, and only 27% lead to an offer of employment. Traineeships too often amount to an unpaid probationary period which ends in nothing because the trainee is replaced with another trainee;
- Young people are much more likely than older people to be in precarious work. Fixed-term contracts have increased rapidly for younger people, covering 43.3% of 15 to 24-year-olds in 2015, compared with 14.1% of all workers.

ETUC has also continuously campaigned that the European institutions clearly distinguish the policy developments on volunteering from good-quality long-term employment of young people. For example, in the context of establishing the European Solidarity Corps in 2017,¹⁵ ETUC has taken a clear position warning against blurring the distinction between supporting volunteering and quality jobs for young people. The ETUC Youth Committee supported the setting up of an ESC aimed at fostering solidarity, active citizenship, and enabling young people to develop their skills and ability to interact with others from different cultures and speaking different languages. This must not mean forcing young people into unpaid labour and a clear distinction between the two policy approaches should be maintained.

¹² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9577&furtherNews=yes>

¹³ [Revisited fight against youth unemployment - ETUC Youth Resolution | ETUC](#)

¹⁴ <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/young-people-need-pay-rise-ourpayrise>

¹⁵ <https://www.etuc.org/en/pressrelease/eu-policy-makers-should-not-confuse-volunteering-and-youth-employment>



04

WHAT IS THE EU DOING FOR YOUTH?



CORE MESSAGES

Responding to the challenges faced by young workers, the EU has taken a series of legislative, policy and financial initiatives over the last years.

The flagship youth initiative at the EU level has been the Youth Guarantee, introduced in 2012 and reinforced in 2020. It has been backed up with the funding stream through the European Social Fund. The principle of the Youth Guarantee has also been integrated into the EU Pillar of Social Rights. The EU Pillar of Social Rights and its latest Action Plan reflect also the challenging work and life situations faced by youth, and have several priorities for youth, including adequate social protection, quality education and training and smooth professional transitions.

The EU has also taken actions to strengthen the quality of apprenticeships and traineeships which young people often use to enter employment. Further initiatives have been adopted to address the needs of migrants and young women.

However, given the scale of challenges faced by the youth in Europe, the policy actions at the EU level need to be further developed. The current funding levels have not been sufficient to reach all those in need. The offers of help made to young people were not always well targeted, did not reflect the labour market conditions and often did not translate into sustainable employment outcomes for young people.

ETUC has consistently argued for better designed, more holistic and better funded youth-centred policies at the EU and national levels.

Against the backdrop of dramatic youth unemployment rates across the Union, EU Member States and European institutions have been actively engaged in implementing policy measures aimed at increasing the employability and addressing the barriers faced by groups of disadvantaged young people.¹⁶

High levels of youth unemployment and long school-to-work transitions, and lack of valuable learning opportunities for youth were already seen, prior to the crisis, as a structural challenge in many EU countries. The lack of work experience of new entrants in the labour market, as well as the abusive use of traineeships in some contexts were considered to be important issues to address at the national and EU level.

¹⁶ 'Are they working? A review of approaches to supporting young people into work', Mutual Learning Programme (MLP) Thematic Paper, November 2013.

4.1. YOUTH GUARANTEE AND YOUTH EMPLOYMENT INITIATIVE

With the advent of the crisis, those young people not in employment, education or training (NEETs) were identified as the most problematic group in the context of rising youth unemployment. To address the issue, the European Commission responded by launching the Europe 2020 **Youth on the Move** Flagship Initiative¹⁷ and subsequently, as part of the former, the **Youth Opportunities Initiative**.¹⁸ Both initiatives called for concerted action from Member State authorities, businesses, social partners and the EU to come up with innovative ways of offering young people opportunities to develop their skills and find their place in the labour market. Special emphasis was already placed on providing pathways back into education and training as well as enabling contact with the labour market.

The European Commission also **introduced new indicators, such as the NEET rate**, to monitor the labour market and social situation of young people, facilitate comparison between Member States in the context of the Europe 2020 strategy, and to raise the visibility of youth issues on the political agenda of the EU.

Commitments to reducing rising youth unemployment and NEET rates by improving transitions from education to work were reiterated in the Commission's Communication '**Towards a job-rich recovery**'¹⁹ in 2012, which led that same year to the adoption of the Youth Employment Package recommending the establishment of a Youth Guarantee.

The **Youth Employment Package** contained a comprehensive Staff Working Document accompanying the Commission's proposal for a Council Recommendation on establishing a Youth Guarantee²⁰, elaborating on the concept of the YG, its fundamental principles, providing country-specific examples, and an investment approach for such a scheme (costs vs. benefits).

The Council Recommendation on the **Youth Guarantee** (YG) was adopted on 22 April 2013, calling on Member States to ensure that all young people under 25 receive a good quality offer of employment, continued education, an apprenticeship or a traineeship within four months of leaving formal education or becoming unemployed. By May 2014, all Member States presented their **Youth Guarantee Implementation Plans**.

In 2020, the EU has reinforced the Youth Guarantee²¹, extending the commitment to all young people under 30 and strengthening the outreach to vulnerable young people across the EU. The reinforced Youth Guarantee reiterates the pledge for an offer of employment, education, apprenticeship or training within four months. It aims to be more inclusive to avoid discrimination, with a wider outreach to more vulnerable groups, such as youth from racial and ethnic minorities, with disabilities, or living in some rural, remote or disadvantaged urban areas. It also aims to provide a better link with the needs of companies, focussing the skills required - in particular those for the green and digital transitions - and short preparatory courses. It also aims to provide tailored counselling, guidance and mentoring. It also aims to back up the new offers with the funds from the EU budget, including under the NextGenerationEU financing arrangements.

Youth Guarantee schemes are mostly funded from both Member State contributions and the EU through the European Social Fund (ESF). Moreover, additional EU funding is provided through the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) in Member States with regions where youth unemployment was higher than 25%. The Youth Employment Initiative was launched in 2014 with a total budget of €6.4 billion, targeted to young people not in employment, education or training in 20 Member States. Following the agreement of the European Parliament and the Council in April 2017, the total Youth Employment Initiative budget went up to €8.8 billion. This budget was further increased in 2019, to around €9 billion.²²

By 2020, more than 20 million young people registered with one of the national Youth Guarantee Schemes since 2014, on average.²³ Amongst these, more than 14 million young people took up an offer of employment, education, traineeship or apprenticeship since 2014, representing a coverage rate of around 70%. Results of the monitoring of the Youth Guarantee showed a mixed picture of its effectiveness.

¹⁷ COM(2010) 477 final.

¹⁸ COM(2011) 933 final.

¹⁹ COM(2012) 173 final.

²⁰ SWD(2012) 409 final, 5.12.2012.

²¹ [The reinforced Youth Guarantee - Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079)

²² <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

²³ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1079>

Cumulatively since the launch of the YG in 2014 there have been 30.4 million new starts on YG schemes²⁴. Amongst these, by 2018, 28.5 million have exited the process, leaving 1.9 million registered at the end of 2017. Of those that exited by 2018 the YG schemes, 19.2 million (67.3%) were known to have taken up work or education/training opportunities, 14.4 million in the open market and 4.8 million that were either partially or fully funded through public money. Of the remainder, 3.1 million left the YG without an offer (or 11%) and 6.3 million went to unknown destinations.

The assessment of Youth Guarantee by the European Court of Auditors also pointed out mixed picture of YG achievement across the Union (ECA 2017). The auditors concluded that Member States had made some progress in implementing the Youth Guarantee, and some positive results for young people participating had been achieved. However, no Member State has achieved the stated strategic objective of the Youth Guarantee through ensuring that all those not in employment, education or training had the opportunity to take up an offer within four months. The key factors limiting the effectiveness of the Youth Guarantee were identified by the auditors to be the following:

- EU budget resources alone were insufficient to address all young people affected; the overall cost and available funding were not assessed by Member States and that there was a risk of EU funding simply replacing national funding rather than adding extra value;
- The lack of strategies with clear milestones and objectives to reach all those who needed offers of employment, education or training;
- The insufficient assessment of its target group by the Member State authorities;
- The poor quality of the available data on the progress and results of the Youth Guarantee schemes making it difficult to assess its results.

One of the core recommendations of the auditors has been for the Member States to ensure that offers of employment, education or training match the participants' profiles and labour market demand, and therefore lead to sustainable employment.

Similarly, an independent evaluation of the Youth Guarantee researchers found some positive effects of Youth Guarantee schemes (ICON 2018). It considered that funding via the Youth Employment Initiative (YEI) and the European Structural Fund (ESF) played a key role in supporting YG measures financially. This was especially important in those countries suffering from high NEET rates, and a significant economic downturn or structural challenges. Many of these countries increased spending on active labour market policy measures, which the evaluators also concluded as an indirect effect of the YG. In some Member States, the YG also fostered introduction of reforms of national youth policies, improvements in monitoring systems for activation policies among young people, and the development of partnerships. These changes are likely to outlast the YG initiative and therefore provide sustained and ongoing benefits.

On the other hand, not all Youth Guarantee objectives were considered to be achieved (ICON 2018). In particular, the Youth Guarantee schemes did not reduce labour market segmentation through quality offers nor provided a remedy for imperfectly performing education systems. This was mostly due to the prevalence of employment offers compared to relatively few education or apprenticeship offers for the Youth Guarantee participants. Also, a number of Member States were not able to fully address the whole range of needs and the heterogeneity of the NEET population – especially those furthest away from the labour market. In contrast, countries that performed well generally improved the capacity of their Public Employment Services (PES) and developed partnerships to implement strong outreach programmes.

²⁴ See YG Monitoring Report, <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1143&langId=en#YGIF>

4.2. ACTIONS ON TRAINEESHIPS AND APPRENTICESHIPS

To accompany the Youth Guarantee, a number of actions have also been taken to improve the quality and availability of vocational education and training offers, in particular apprenticeships and traineeships.

In this context, a Recommendation on a Quality Framework for Traineeships (QFT) was adopted by the Council in 2014 ((2014/C 88/01)²⁵, calling for traineeships to provide high quality learning content and fair working conditions so that they support education-to-work transitions and increase the employability of trainees. This reflected the increasing popularity of traineeships as a way for young people to gain necessary work experience before entering regular employment. On the other hand, some traineeships offer poor working and development conditions, lacking strong learning elements, have poor working conditions, and trainees being excluded from the social security coverage.

QFT has recommended 22 quality elements for traineeships outside formal education which can be incorporated in the national legislation or social partner agreements, depending on the national contexts. This is aimed to ensure fair working conditions for trainees, as well as high quality learning contents of traineeships, thus serving as a genuine stepping stone into regular employment.

The Commission's own analysis indicated a limited progress at the national level in implementing the QFT (European Commission 2016). Half of the Member States have undertaken legal changes that strengthened the alignment of national legal frameworks with the Council Recommendation since its adoption in 2014, or report plans to do so. The extent to which new legislation and social partner agreements are respected in practice of traineeships remains to be improved. The Commission also highlighted that in the majority of EU countries, cooperation with social partners in terms of making traineeships compatible with the QFT should be improved.

Similarly in the field of apprenticeships, the Council has adopted a **Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships** (2018).²⁶ The framework sets out 14 criteria in relation to working and learning conditions as well as to framework conditions. It aims to provide a common set of quality standards and support the national level efforts to reform and modernise apprenticeship systems that provide an excellent learning and career pathway.

European Union has also taken action on apprenticeships through introducing **the European Alliance for Apprenticeships**.²⁷ ETUC is a full member of the Alliance, thus signalling its support to the initiative. The Alliance is a voluntary initiative aimed at strengthening the quality, supply and overall image of apprenticeships across Europe, while also promoting the mobility of apprentices. These aims are promoted through national commitments and voluntary pledges from stakeholders. The European Commission also provides support services, and a platform for sharing experiences and learning from best practices of providing high-quality apprenticeships.

On 17 November 2015, the Commission and CSR Europe²⁸ launched **the European Pact for Youth** with the objective of developing partnerships in support of youth employability and inclusion. The aim of the Pact is to foster the creation of 10,000 quality business-education partnerships, with the shared target of generating at least 100,000 new good quality apprenticeships, traineeships or entry-level jobs.²⁹

The Commission stressed its continued commitment to providing young people with better employment (Youth Guarantee) and education and training opportunities (Quality Framework for Apprenticeships), as well as opportunities for learning mobility and participation (Erasmus+) in its 2016 Communication Investing in Europe's Youth.³⁰

²⁵ COM(2013) 857 final.

²⁶ <https://ec.europa.eu/esf/transnationality/content/european-framework-quality-and-effective-apprenticeships>

²⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=1147&langId=en>

²⁸ The European Business Network for Corporate Social Responsibility.

²⁹ 'EU policies and support in favour of youth employment', DG Employment Briefing Paper.

³⁰ Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. 2016. Investing in Europe's Youth. <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=COM:2016:940:FIN&from=FR>

These goals informed the development of the EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027³¹, with three key areas of action:

- ENGAGE: Fostering youth participation in democratic life;
- CONNECT: Bringing young people together across the EU and beyond to foster voluntary engagement, learning mobility, solidarity and intercultural understanding;
- EMPOWER: Supporting youth empowerment through quality, innovation and recognition of youth work.

4.3. EUROPEAN PILLAR OF SOCIAL RIGHTS AND YOUNG WORKERS

Youth employment focus received a further boost in the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights. In 2017, after a wide consultation on the draft **European Pillar of Social Rights** held during 2016, the European Commission published the final version of the Pillar on the 26 April 2017.³² The publication of the Pillar is part of a wider set of initiatives concerning the future of the European Union and the strengthening of its social dimension, including the publication of a 'White paper on the Future of the European Union'³³ and of a 'Reflection paper on the Social Dimension of Europe'.³⁴ The Pillar primarily concerns the euro area but is applicable to all EU Member States wishing to take part, and consists of a list of 20 key principles, framed as 'rights', organised around three chapters:

- 1) Equal opportunities and access to the labour market;
- 2) Fair working conditions;
- 3) Social protection and inclusion.

In relation to young people, the following principles of the Pillar are particularly important.

TABLE 4.1: KEY PILLAR PRINCIPLES RELEVANT TO YOUTH

1: Education, training and life-long learning	Everyone has the right to quality and inclusive education, training and life-long learning in order to maintain and acquire skills that enable them to participate fully in society and manage successfully transitions in the labour market.
4: Active support to employment	Everyone has the right to transfer social protection and training entitlements during professional transitions.

Most recently, a **dedicated Action Plan** was adopted (March 2021)³⁵ to implement the EPSR, with high-level political commitments to implement the social objectives for upward convergence and a strong social Europe related to the 20 principles of the EPSR. The ambition of the Action Plan is to put into practice, through a set of actions at the EU and Member State level, the overall goal of the European Pillar of Social Rights and ensure the unique social and economic model in the EU offers opportunities for all Europe's citizens to enjoy what the Plan sees as "the most equal societies in the world, the highest standards in working conditions, and broad social protection" (p. 5). As a principle, this should also include young people across the Union who form a sizeable proportion of Europeans and will determine the future development of the economic and social model in the EU.

³¹ <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:C:2018:456:FULL>

³² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/priorities/deeper-and-fairer-economic-and-monetary-union/european-pillar-social-rights_en

³³ Available at https://europa.eu/european-union/sites/europaeu/files/whitepaper_en.pdf

³⁴ Available at https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-social-dimension-europe_en

³⁵ See [The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/publications/reflection-paper-social-dimension-europe_en)

However, the Action Plan does not have a genuinely youth centric approach. Issues of young people are treated as a separate policy theme, with actions proposed which have been implemented for some time and which effectiveness is under question (e.g. the Youth Guarantee). No new actions specific to addressing the challenges of young people in the EU are envisaged. On the other hand, genuine new opportunities to address critical youth issues such as their over-representation in precarious work or the lack of youth access to adequate social protection are left out from the Plan.

Three headline targets in the Action Plan reflect some relevant youth issues such as reducing the NEET rate or early school leaving but do not adopt a genuine youth perspective. In particular, specific targets critical to the main challenges of young people are missing from the Plan. This gap particularly relates to an explicit target related to reducing youth unemployment and the numbers of youth in poverty and socially excluded.

The focus in the Action Plan on reinforced Youth Guarantee is relevant to youth concerns, but misses a binding definition of quality standards for its support offers to the youth. In the implementation of ESF+, all Member States should dedicate a specific proportion of the funding to addressing youth in precarious working conditions – as opposed to current approach where this applies only to those Member States where the youth unemployment is above EU average.

In the area of creating jobs, the actions proposed in the Plan miss an opportunity to adopt a youth perspective. The existing instruments such as SURE and EASE are geared to support workers having standard employment contracts, whereas many young people are in precarious work contracts and thus miss out on the support offered. Actions on energising Europe's industrial eco-systems, promoting social economy and fostering entrepreneurship do not have a youth perspective, even though this is relevant. Actions to energise social dialogue at the workplaces do not acknowledge that many young workers are not members of trade unions and thus not systematically covered in the collective bargaining processes.

In the area of working conditions, actions on regulating the impact of digitalisation in the workplaces, do not reflect the youth perspective, although youth face specific challenges in relation to the digitalisation at work. Similarly, actions on occupational health and safety standards do not take into account a youth perspective. However, young workers experience OSH issues differently in comparison to adults. Finally, actions are also proposed in relation to protecting mobile workers including seasonal workers. None of actions proposed recognise the youth dimension in intra-EU worker mobility including seasonal mobility. This is ignoring the fact that a significant proportion of mobile workers including seasonal workers are young people, who face a specific set of challenges in participating in intra-EU mobility.

In the area of skills, proposed actions are relevant and appropriate to the needs of youth but the Pact for Skills should take into account youth perspective on skills.

In the area of equality, proposed actions miss out a youth focus even though this is relevant. This relates for example to the actions combatting discrimination in the workplaces, where youth often face a less preferential treatment compared to more established workers. The implementation of the Work Life Balance Directive should also consider how the needs of young parents are met through measures adopted through the directive, such as increased paternity leave, and how this has contributed to more equality at work and at home between young women and men. The action proposed on Roma equality, inclusion and participation should also include a youth lenses.

Finally, none of the Plan actions proposed in the social protection and inclusion area explicitly acknowledges the significant challenges faced by young people in accessing the current social protection systems across the EU. Young people in particular face challenges in accessing the adequate social protection systems as they tend to be not adequately covered in the existing social security safety nets and thus more likely to “fall through the cracks”. This is a particularly important area of action missed in the Plan.

In the context of implementing the Pillar and supporting young workers, the EC Initiative to support Work-Life Balance for Working Parents and Carers is particularly relevant for young people, men and women. The adoption of **the Work-Life Balance Directive in 2019**³⁶ aims to improve the situation of parents and carers through establishing a set of minimum standards across the EU for:

- Paternity leave - fathers or second parents will be able to take at least 10 working days of leave around the time of birth of a child paid at a level equal to that currently set at EU level for maternity leave (in line with article 11 of Council Directive 92/85/EEC). The right to paternity leave will not be subject to a prior service requirement. However, the payment of paternity leave can be subject to a six-month prior service requirement. Member states with more generous parental leave systems will be able to keep their current national arrangements;
- Parental leave - an individual right to 4 months of parental leave, from which 2 months are non-transferable between the parents and are paid. The level of payment and the age limit of the child will be set by member states;
- Carers' leave - a new concept at EU level for workers caring for relatives in need of care or support due to serious medical reasons. Carers will be able to take 5 working days per year. Member states may use a different reference period, allocate leave on a case-by-case basis, and may introduce additional conditions for the exercise of this right;
- Flexible working arrangements - the right for parents to request these arrangements has been extended to include working carers.

Relevant to the needs of young migrants, is **the European partnership for integration** (offering opportunities for refugees to integrate into the European labour market).³⁷ It has been signed in 2017 by the European Commission and the EU Social and Economic partners ETUC, BusinessEurope, UAPME, CEEP and Eurochambers. The Partnership established a number of key principles and commitments to support and strengthen opportunities for refugees and migrants legally residing in the EU to integrate into the European labour market, including:

- Providing support as early as possible;
- Ensuring that integration benefits refugees as well as the economy and society at large and;
- Ensuring a multi-stakeholder approach.

In the Partnership, the social partners have committed to share best practices for labour market integration of refugees, for instance the organisation of mentoring programmes to integrate them into the workplace or facilitating the identification, assessment and documentation of skills and qualifications. They have also committed to promote the Partnership amongst their national members and strengthen cooperation with public authorities at all appropriate levels.

The European Commission has committed, amongst other things, to promote synergies with EU funds, ensure synergies with other related initiatives at European level and continue to work with relevant EU bodies, groups, committees and networks as well as Social and Economic partners to support the labour market integration of refugees.

³⁶ <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2019/06/13/better-work-life-balance-for-parents-and-carers-in-the-eu-council-adopts-new-rules/>

³⁷ <https://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=9029&furtherNews=yes>



05

WHAT ARE THE NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS DOING FOR YOUTH?



CORE MESSAGES

National trade unions have been active to address the challenges and needs of youth in general and young workers in particular. We have identified several examples of successful collective agreements and other social dialogue activities which have improved working, training and education conditions for youth. This demonstrates a direct link to a more effective implementation of the EU Pillar of Social Rights and its relevant core principles to provide young people with equal opportunities and access to the labour market; ensure their fair working conditions; and provide adequate social protection and inclusion.

Successes have also identified internally within the national trade unions to reflect and engage better with young people – including actions to adopt a more strategic approach to youth, develop strong dedicated youth-specific structures internally and take an in-depth look at the actual needs of youth.

However, gaps remain. First of all, there is a low tendency to cover youth issues in binding collective agreements. Having said that, the coverage of youth issues in other softer social dialogue activities is broader, indicating the unions are in general aware of the needs of youth.

At the same time, youth relevant issues and challenges are not systematically embedded and reflected in the collective bargaining processes and outcomes across all national trade unions. Therefore, collective bargaining outcomes do not systematically reflect the alarming situation and multiple challenges of youth faced in the labour market. This is especially alarming in those countries where youth face particularly extensive precarious working, training and education-to-work transition conditions.

Collective agreements and other social dialogue activities also suffer from thematic gaps in missing out to address all the core challenges faced by youth. Issues such as the smaller minimum wage paid to young workers, conversion of temporary and flexible contracts into more permanent employment relationships, access to good-quality training are included in the collective agreements on a sporadic basis.

Internally, several trade unions have taken a strategic approach to address the needs of young people, build and develop strong internal youth-specific actions and undertake profound assessments of the needs of youth. However, these actions are not undertaken systematically across the majority of ETUC affiliates and this gap could be further closed.

At the national level, several ETUC member trade unions have taken a range of actions to address the issues and challenges faced by young workers. These actions to improve the working and living conditions of youth at workplaces and education institutions. Their aim is supportive of a better implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and its relevant core principles to provide young people with equal opportunities and access to the labour market; ensure their fair working conditions; and provide adequate social protection and inclusion.

These actions include activities both through the range of social dialogue activities (such as collective agreements) as well as actions by trade unions alone and internally to address better the needs of youth.

In relation to social dialogue, core relevant activities relate to the union bargaining and negotiating national, sectoral and cross-sectoral collective agreements which reflect the needs of young workers. Several successful examples of these have been identified, including specifically provisions for young workers and young people. They show the diversity of direct relevant topics and challenges addressed through the collective agreements and the range of successes in improving the situation of young workers. They have enabled the trade unions to achieve real change at workplaces to improve the working conditions for young workers, as well as their training and learning environments.

However, from the youth perspective, gaps in the social dialogue remain. A large number of trade unions do not conclude any or have only a very small number of collective agreements reflecting the specific needs of the youth. This means collective bargaining outcomes do not adequately and systematically reflect the alarming situation and multiple challenges of youth faced in the labour market (see also section 2). Several core challenges facing young workers are not systematically addressed in the collective agreements. Issues such as the smaller minimum wage paid to young workers, conversion of temporary and flexible contracts into more permanent employment relationships, access to good-quality training are included in the collective agreements on a sporadic basis.

This gap between the youth reality and the current social dialogue outcomes is particularly alarming in those countries where young people have especially wide-ranging challenges in accessing and retaining good-quality, stable and well-paid jobs, apprenticeships and traineeships.

Outside collective bargaining processes, the majority of trade unions do take other forms of social dialogue actions relating to youth. The most frequently occurring type reported by the majority of trade unions related to the soft type of social dialogue – i.e. discussion and exchanges of views on the issues relating to the young people. This was followed by a mix of social dialogue types used by the trade unions, which included frequently the development of legislation, policies and measures and joint actions aimed at young people.

Therefore, the potential of existing social dialogue structures at national, cross-sectoral and sectoral level to reflect the needs of young people could be further strengthened. More trade unions could adopt a genuinely strategic approach to address the needs of the youth more systematically in the social dialogue structures, actions, and its outcomes. Existing actions taken by individual trade unions in several countries could be more widely adopted across the ETUC members, including the following:

- Inside the union, developing an up-to-date understanding of the actual needs of youth in the workplaces in the sector(s) covered by the unions. This could be done through developing an internal structure specifically focused on youth, undertaking targeted research on the needs of youth, engaging more systematically with young trade unionists. Such actions are currently not taken on a regular basis by all ETUC members;
- Ensuring that the union's negotiation teams for collective agreements include youth delegates who bring a mandate to reflect the issues relevant to the youth. This is not currently happening systematically across ETUC membership;
- Reflecting the key concerns and challenges facing young people – such as access to decent wages, good-quality training, conversion of flexible employment into more stable employment, pathways from traineeships and apprenticeships into the stable employment.

Several trade unions have also taken actions to address the needs of youth on their own, and also through internal activities. In particular, this related to the outreach activities for most vulnerable youth. Examples have also been identified where several trade unions have taken a strategic approach to address the needs of young people, build and develop strong internal youth-specific actions and undertake profound assessments of the needs of youth. However, these actions are not undertaken systematically across the majority of ETUC affiliates and this gap could be further closed.

Key research findings supporting this analysis are summarized in the next pages.

5.1. ACTIONS FOR YOUTH IN COLLECTIVE BARGAINING



POTENTIAL REFLECTIONS FOR NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS:

- How best to include youth issues in the collective bargaining process and outcomes?
- Which strategies and tips work and don't?

The research first examined the different levels and types of social dialogue activities covering youth and responding to the needs of young workers.

The national trade union actions for youth have been examined firstly through the framework of the social dialogue. Social dialogue at the national level typically takes a number of forms and shapes (see Figure 5.1). Social dialogue activities typically include the negotiation and conclusion of collective bargaining agreements covering usually the working conditions, but also other forms of cooperation and joint working between worker and employer organisations – including joint discussions, consultations, actions, positions, statements and guidelines.

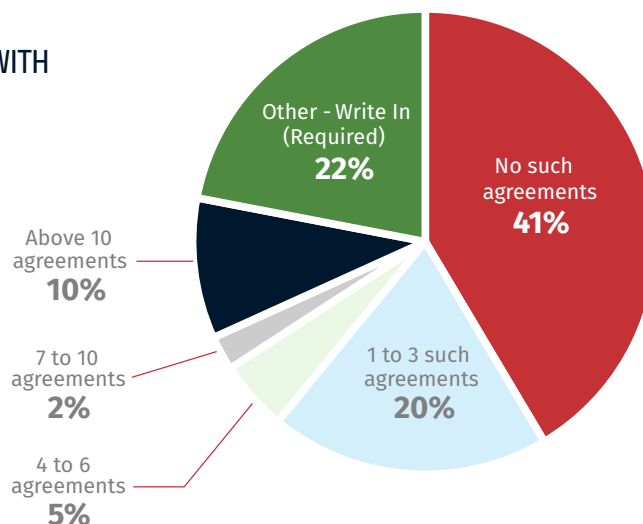
This wide range of social dialogue activities also takes place at several levels, potentially covering the whole economy (which is rarely happening), cross-sectoral level covering several sectors, sectoral level covering one sector and company level covering one company.

FIGURE 5.1: DIFFERENT FORMS OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE



The most binding form of social dialogue is **collective bargaining and collective bargaining agreements reached**. Amongst 41 trade unions ETUC members responding to the online survey launched by the project, the majority have negotiated collective agreements since 2014 to include provisions specifically addressing the young workers (see Figure 5.2). However, a large proportion of trade unions – over 40% - did not negotiate such agreements. Furthermore, amongst these trade unions who have reported having such agreements, the number of such agreements tended to be small: 20% negotiated below 3 collective agreements. In contrast, only 10% of responding unions have negotiated above 10 such agreements. This indicates a gap in the currently existing social dialogue outcomes in the collective agreements from the perspective of youth. Specific issues relating to the working conditions, training and education affecting the young workers are not systematically reflected in the typical collective agreements negotiated.

FIGURE 5.2: COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS WITH PROVISIONS ADDRESSING SPECIFICALLY YOUNG WORKERS (SINCE 2014)



Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=41. The nine responding trade unions under “other” indicated that it was impossible to assert the number of such agreements, they are negotiated by the member unions, or simply not known.

When trade unions do negotiate the collective agreements specifically addressing the issues and challenges faced by youth, they typically cover a wide range of topics of direct relevance to the core concerns of young workers and young people in general. As shown in Table 5.1, the collective agreements negotiated by the trade unions also covering young workers included a wide range of topics of high relevance to young workers. They included issues pertaining to the traineeships (reported by 22 unions) and apprentices (24 unions), the working conditions and terms of employment (22 unions), and other issues (10 unions). 15 unions reported also negotiating collective agreements covering the issues of young migrants and young women.

TABLE 5.1: THEMES COVERED IN THE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS NEGOTIATED SINCE 2014 COVERING ALSO YOUNG WORKERS

Traineeships		Apprenticeships or other dual training forms		Working conditions and terms of employment such as pay, working time		Work life balance measures		Other measures targeting specifically young women		Other measures targeting specifically young migrants		Other	
%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No
78.6%	22	85.7%	24	78.6%	22	71.4%	20	53.6%	15	53.6%	15	35.7%	10

Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=28.

In the online survey, trade unions provided further details about 24 collective agreements concluded recently including provisions for young workers. Key highlights of these agreements include:

- Collective agreements negotiated were both extensions of existing agreements as well as new agreements concluded: 6 agreements being an extension of an existing collective agreements, with 9 of such agreements being concluded as new agreements (there was no information on remaining agreements);
- Collective agreements negotiated were both open-ended and of specific duration: 7 agreements concluded were open-ended, indefinite duration or without expiration, whilst 6 agreements concluded were valid for a certain number of years;
- 12 agreements were at the sectoral level (such as manufacturing, chemical, banking, construction, or all private sector), with 6 agreements negotiated at the company level;
- 13 agreements were universally applicable, whereas only 3 agreements were applicable only to the signatory parties;
- The collective agreements also had a wide range of topics included, with 3 agreements covering several topics of concern to young workers, 5 on traineeships, 4 on wages, 3 on training, 2 on the issues of work life balance.

Several examples of collective agreements including specifically provisions for young workers and young people are provided in Box 5.1 below. They show the diversity of topics and challenges addressed through collective agreements and the range of successes in improving the situation of young workers. At the same time, several core challenges facing young workers are not systematically addressed in the collective agreements. Issues such as the smaller minimum wage paid to young workers, conversion of temporary and flexible contracts into more permanent employment relationships, access to good-quality training tend to be included in the collective agreements on a sporadic basis.

An example of this gap can be provided relating to the minimum wage paid at a lower rate to young people. As shown in section 2.2, 6 countries in 2020 had rules whereby this was the case. However, only few collective agreements attempting to correct this have been reported through the project's research.



BOX 5.1: EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS COVERING SPECIFICALLY YOUNG WORKERS

Belgium: the union confederation ACV-CSC highlighted several agreements:

Collective agreement nr. 43 concerning the guarantee of the minimum average wage was negotiated by interprofessional social partners. Even though most sectors have minimum wages above the minimum in the collective agreements and this makes the direct effect on young people rather limited. On the other hand, this agreement inspired a lot of sectors also to abolish the age discrimination in their sectoral agreements. For ACV-CSC, this was one of the key priorities to demonstrate that trade unions are and can be relevant for young people. The agreement came into force on 1 January 2015 and has an indefinite duration. It applies to the whole private sector and is universally applicable. This also means that since January, 1, 2015, the minimum age for the minimum wage has decreased from 21 years to 18 years.

Collective agreement nr. 103bis for a time credit, a reduction of the career and an “end of career”-job was also negotiated by interprofessional social partners. Especially the right to take a career break or work part time for education or training or for the care of young children is very interesting for young people. Before 2015, workers under the age of 50 could also take a career break or work part time for other purposes (for example for a long voyage). This scheme was abolished since 2015. The agreement came into force on 1 January 2015 and has an indefinite duration. It applies to the whole private sector and is universally applicable. The agreement consist of two parts: the right to part time work for older workers; and the right to take a career break or to work part time also for younger work, for four purposes: education or training, care of children, care of family members with serious illness, or palliative care.



Denmark:

Collective Agreement for the Manufacturing Sector 2014 - 2017, signed by CO-industri and the Confederation of Industrial Employers (DI). All companies in the manufacturing sector that are members of the Confederation of Industrial Employers are covered. Covers working conditions, working time, pension, wage floor, holiday and education and training (young and other workers).

In Germany, several collective agreements at the sectoral and company level in the recent years included provisions relevant to young workers and especially the working conditions, availability of apprenticeships and ensuring their transition to permanent contracts:³⁸

- Commitment to further dialogue: was included in the Steel industry sectoral agreement in north west Germany: commitment to negotiate on the topic of students in dual studies, commitment to establish a dialogue on the future of youth and improvement of the attractiveness of apprenticeships in the sector;
- Metal sector, Automobile sector, Bavaria region included an agreement to provide paid leave of one day before the written final examination of the apprentice;
- Public sector, all regions (except Hessen), textile industry, energy sector: extension of the commitment to employ the apprentices after conclusion of their apprenticeship; Volkswagen AG commitment to provide 1500 apprenticeship places in the 2018-2020 period; automobile sector in Bavaria: commitment to employ apprentices for at least 6 months for employers with 20 employees.

France:

- Sectoral agreement: “*Accord du 5 septembre 2017 relatif aux stagiaires*” was negotiated for the trade unions’ side : FG FO Construction ; BATIMAT-TP CFTC ; CFTD construction bois ; CFE-CGC BTP and for the employers’ side : FNTP ; FNSCOP. It stipulates a written statement, a minimum “gratification” (compensation for the trainee), social protection (protection against accidents at work and occupational disease - eventual complementary social protection), protection of trainees against discrimination (“on the ground of its situation of trainee”) and integration of the trainee in the workplace (linked to the pedagogical purpose). This collective agreement is going further than the law of July, 10th 2014 on traineeships/internships entered in force after the last sectoral collective agreement. The pedagogical purpose is reinforced and the trainee is better protected. However, the minimum gratification is still low (3,15 EUR per hour) and does not go behind the minimum imposed by the law and the right to leave of the trainee for certain reasons (maternity ; paternity ; sickness) is reinforced with an alignment on workers’ rights (example : 4 days for marriage ; 3 days for the death of a close-relative etc...) but without compensation. It is a new agreement repealing and replacing the national collective agreement of the 30th of June 2010 on traineeships in public construction companies. It also an open-ended collective agreement applicable sectoral level to the public construction companies;
- Company level: “*Accord de groupe Airbus sur la gestion des emplois et des parcours professionnels*” was negotiated for the trade unions’ side: FO ; CFTD ; CFE-CGC : CFTC and for the employer’ side : Head of Human Resources of Airbus France. It includes one chapter on traineeships and “alternance” (dual form of vocational training) in link with the two high schools of the group Airbus and with universities through CIFRE thesis (part-time work + time to work on the doctorate thesis), as well as the integration of the trainee in the workplace (linked to the pedagogical purpose and the tutors with sufficient means and training) and the preference to previous trainees or interns for external hiring of the group Airbus. It is too soon to fully assert the impact of these provisions on young workers in this collective agreement.

³⁸ <https://www.boeckler.de/tools/tarifabschluesse/index.php#>

**Italy:**

Dual apprenticeship agreement between Confindustria, CGIL, CISL and UIL allows the use of apprenticeships for young people starting from the period of professional, technical or university education; starting from May-16 and without expiration, it also includes more advantageous wage regulation in the dual apprenticeship.

Sweden:

Akademikerna SSR has reported an agreement on the conditions for temporary employment as a student employee, aiming to improve the working conditions of students working alongside their studies. For example, the employer is limited to giving maximum four fixed-term contracts to the student employee. The purpose, length and conditions of working time shall be placed and the conditions are otherwise determined in a way that contributes to the achievement of the basic purpose of the employment. The employer will determine the working time after consultation with the worker. The location needs also to take into account the employee's need to participate in mandatory tasks, such as examination in the context of ongoing training.

The project workshop in Frankfurt, Germany, in October 2019 highlighted the experiences of trade unions in Germany using the collective bargaining processes for young workers and young people (see Box 5.2).

**BOX 5.2: THE EXPERIENCE OF ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES OF YOUNG WORKERS BY TRADE UNIONS IN GERMANY**

DGB the national trade union confederation is formed of eight unions, each of which has a youth organization. DGB Jugend (the umbrella confederation organization for youth) has around 500,000 members, covering around 14% of the young workforce. Overall, the collective bargaining coverage achieved by DGB members is around 85%.

Addressing the precariousness of work, often also faced by young workers, has been on the priority agenda for DGB. For example, one its members IG Metal has a specific initiative addressing the platform workers, whilst another member union – Verdi – also works specifically on platform and precarious workers.

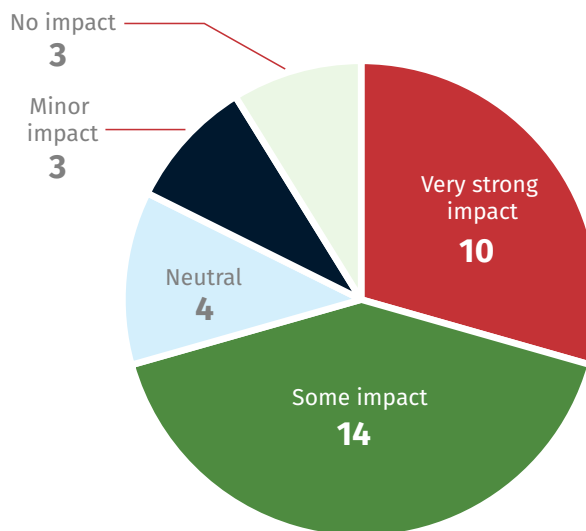
Another priority issue for DGB has been improvement of the working conditions and pay for the apprentices in Germany, as apprenticeship constitutes a very important route for young people to enter the labour market. Until 2019, there was no minimum wage for the apprenticeships, and due to the efforts of DGB, in 2019 a new agreement was reached which stipulates that the wages for apprentices should be at least 80% of collectively bargained wages in the sector where the apprentice is working. DGB efforts have achieved that the wages of apprentices become part of the overall union collective bargaining agenda and are thus reviewed regularly. An important achievement was also to ensure that young apprentices are included as part of the collective bargaining negotiation teams, thus giving them a voice in the process.

DGB provides also other forms of support to apprentices, including online support where experts respond to the concrete questions posed by apprentices, a range of publications by the union to put spotlight at the situation of apprentices, including highlighting the negative practices.

Further information: https://jugend.dgb.de/dgb_jugend/aktionen-und-kampagnen

Importantly, the majority of responding trade unions considered that these collective agreements had either very strong or some impact on young workers and young people in general (see Figure 5.3). This was the case in 24 out of 34 unions. In contrast, six unions reported that such agreements had no or only minor impact.

FIGURE 5.3: THE IMPACT OF THESE COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS ON YOUNG WORKERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GENERAL



Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=34.

5.2 OTHER SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIONS AIMED AT YOUTH



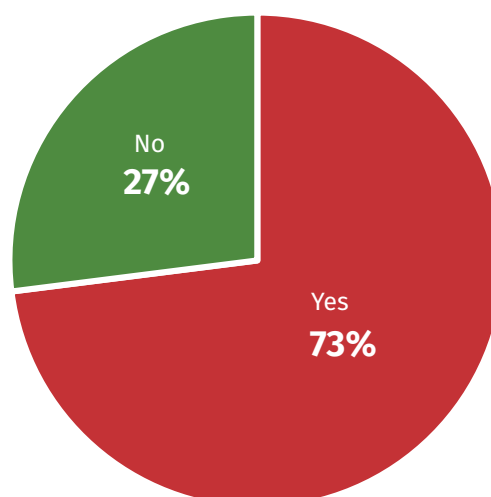
POTENTIAL REFLECTIONS FOR NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS:

- How important are these softer types of social dialogue to address the youth issues?
- Are they happening in your country systematically? If yes, how do achieve this practice? What are the key messages here?
- If this is not happening in your union, why not? What would need to change next to do better?

The majority of trade unions have also been engaged since 2014 in other social dialogue activities where the issues of young workers were also covered. As shown in Figure below, this was reported by over 70% of the trade unions participating in the survey. In contrast, less than a third of unions did not participate in such activities. This means that whilst relatively few unions cover youth issues in binding collective agreements, the coverage of youth issues in other softer social dialogue activities is broader.

This wide range of social dialogue activities also takes place at several levels, potentially covering the whole economy (which is rarely happening), cross-sectoral level covering several sectors, sectoral level covering one sector and company level covering one company.

FIGURE 5.4: TRADE UNIONS ENGAGED IN OTHER SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH YOUNG WORKERS WERE TACKLED SPECIFICALLY IN SOME PROVISIONS



Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=26.

The range of issues and challenges tackled in these social dialogue activities was broad (see Table 5.2). The top three priorities reported by the trade unions related to the working conditions in employment (such as wages), followed by rules regulating traineeships and apprenticeships. In contrast, the social dialogue activities touched to a lesser extent issues relating to the work-life balance challenges faced by young workers. It was also the case that social dialogue considered issues relating to young women and young migrants to a lesser degree.

TABLE 5.2: TOPICS COVERED IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES IN WHICH YOUNG WORKERS WERE TACKLED SPECIFICALLY

TOPIC	PERCENT	COUNT
Working conditions in employment	94.7%	18
Traineeships	84.2%	16
Apprenticeships or other dual training forms	63.2%	12
Work life balance measures	31.6%	6
Measures targeting specifically young women	26.3%	5
Measures targeting specifically young migrants	10.5%	2
Other (e.g. school to work transitions, sport for workers, accessibility of vocational education)	42.1%	6

Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=26.

The range of other social dialogue tools used by trade unions aimed at young people has also been diverse (see Table 5.3). The most frequently occurring type reported by the majority of trade unions related to the soft type of social dialogue – i.e. discussion and exchanges of views on the issues relating to the young people (reported by 16 unions). This was followed by a mix of social dialogue types used by the trade unions, which included frequently the development of legislation, policies and measures and joint actions aimed at young people.

TABLE 5.3: TYPES OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN MOSTLY AIMED AT YOUNG PEOPLE

TYPE	PERCENT	COUNT
Discussion and exchanges of views on issues affecting young people	64.0%	16
Development of new legislation / amending existing legislation	56.0%	14
Developing policies and measures aimed at young people	56.0%	14
Joint actions / projects aimed at young people	56.0%	14
Developing joint policy declarations, joint opinions, analyses, guidelines, codes of conduct, policy orientations	40.0%	10
Other (e.g. ALMPs, Youth Guarantee)	12.0%	3

Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=25.

The positive experience of implementing social dialogue activities in practice at the company level has been highlighted during the project visit to Sanofi company in Frankfurt, Germany (see Box 5.3).



BOX 5.3: EXAMPLE OF HOW A MULTINATIONAL COMPANY ADDRESSES THE NEEDS OF YOUTH THROUGH SOCIAL DIALOGUE: SANOFI, GERMANY

During the first workshop in October 2019, project participants visited on site a local production site of Sanofi (one of the largest pharmaceutical companies worldwide) in Frankfurt, Germany. The visit allowed the opportunity to see the facilities of training, advising and counselling the apprentices trained in the company.

The company apprentices also showcased the work of the youth division of the company's work council. The youth division board consist of nine representatives of apprentices. They are representing around 400 apprentices trained at the company in Frankfurt site, in 20 professions with the apprenticeship lasting between 2.5 and 3 years. Each year, the company takes in around 130 new apprentices who require special support. The youth division works to ensure that the regulations, works agreements, and collective bargaining agreements are applied correctly to the apprentices, that the vocational training provided at the site is of high quality and oriented to future, and that the company offers a permanent job to the apprentice after the conclusion of the apprenticeship.

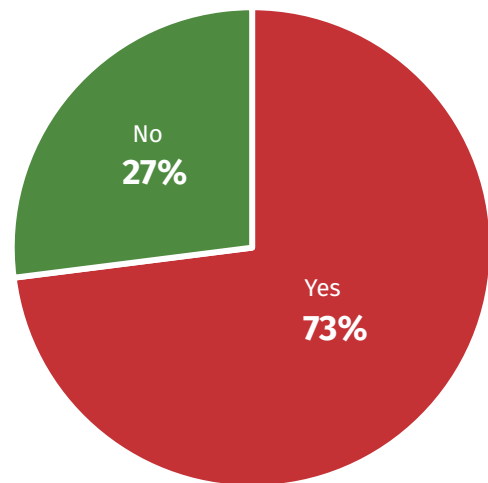
The concrete activities of youth division include regular youth and apprentice meetings 3-4 times a year, regular visits to the training provider, maintaining an homepage on Sanofi intranet, displaying the information about the trade union at the premises of the training provider and providing information to the apprentices at the relevant fairs and events, such as welcome receptions at the start of the apprenticeship.

The trade union also cooperates with the training provider Provalidis. During the visit, Provalidis representatives highlighted the experiences of two special programmes StartPlus and StartPlus integration, aimed at supporting young people to enter an apprenticeship. The programmes provide regular pedagogical assistance and individualized support to address any arising problems. They also ensure that the programme participants participate adequately in the training programme, as well as within the company premises. So far, the programmes supported around 140 participants, of which nearly 90% entered an apprenticeship.

Source: project workshop in Frankfurt, October 2019.

Overall, the majority of trade unions saw a positive impact of these social dialogue activities on young workers and young people in general (see Figure 5.5.). This was reported by 80% responding trade unions, whilst 15% considered no such impact occurring and 5% reported a negative impact.

FIGURE 5.4: THE IMPACT OF THESE SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES ON THE YOUNG WORKERS AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN GENERAL



Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=25.

Positive impacts reported by the trade unions included the following experiences.



BOX 5.4: EXAMPLES OF SUCCESSFUL IMPACT OF TRADE UNION ACTION AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE ACTIVITIES

Austria:

Trade unions in Austria (such as the Gewerkschaft vida union) campaigned successfully in 2019 to keep the youth work councils in the companies. The government wanted to disband the “Jugendvertrauensrat (JVR)” - a workers’ council that defends the rights of young workers in Austria. Using a public campaign including gathering of 40,000 signatures the unions persuaded the government to drop the proposals and keep the youth work councils.³⁹

Belgium:

The impacts achieved through trade union action related to the equal treatment of young workers, better opportunities to combine work with training or care of children and improvement of the specific unemployment benefits for young unemployed.

Estonia:

Due to the trade union action, young people find out that there are trade unions in our country fighting for workers rights (including young workers).

Finland:

The national social dialogue exists where trade unions, employers’ representatives and the government are sitting at the same table. When the government is updating the labor laws, the views of trade unions are carefully listened to, as well as with other issues related to working life.

³⁹ <https://www.itfglobal.org/en/news/win-austrian-young-workers>

**Poland:**

In the last few years, NSZZ “Solidarność” has managed to achieve several successes in the field of youth employment through social dialogue mechanisms.

Firstly, the social dialogue has succeeded in developing recommendations on the quality of traineeships and apprenticeships on the open labour market. This is a certain success, given that in Poland internships and apprenticeships are very poorly regulated and do not provide full protection for young people.

In addition, legislative changes were introduced, which require to sign an employment contract before starting work. Previously, an employee could perform work for 7 days without any contract.

The union has also succeeded in eliminating subminimum wage for people who were starting work for the first time. It was 80% of the minimum wage. As part of the social dialogue, solutions were worked out to introduce a minimum hourly wage. It has improved the situation of people who work under atypical employment contracts.

Serbia:

In Serbia, NGO sector dealing with youth policies and issues rarely have full insight into decent working employment and its impacts to long-term position of youth. Therefore engagement of trade unions is crucial for keeping some level of protection and awareness on youth position on the labour market and in education.

Sweden:

The Confederation of Swedish Enterprise and the Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) have reached an agreement in principle to make it easier for refugees and long-term unemployed to find jobs. The employee will be paid the equivalent of the normal collectively agreed minimum wage after tax, but the employer will pay only 8,000 kronor (809 euro) while the rest will be covered by the state. The new employment form would be available for newly arrived who have been granted residence permit in the past 36 months, young people under 25 who have been unemployed for at least six months and people over 25 who have been unemployed for more than a year. During the contract, which can last up to two years, the employees have the right to study Swedish during working hours without having their salaries docked. After two years, the employment should be turned into a rolling contract.⁴⁰

Slovenia: social dialogue activities ensured better conditions and more rights for young people, young workers in those areas.

In the UK:

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) took the government to court over a dispute of changes made to firefighters’ pensions in 2015.⁴¹ The firefighters’ pension scheme was changed by the government in 2015, and the FBU argued that the protection imposed on younger members was unlawful on age discrimination grounds. The 2015 changes meant that older members could stay in the existing and better pension scheme, and younger members had to transfer to a new and worse scheme, causing financial losses. The FBU initiated over 6,000 Employment Tribunal claims alleging that the changes amounted to unlawful age discrimination. The industrial dispute, which included strike action, means that firefighters on the new scheme will have to be put back on the previous pension scheme.

Source: Online project survey (unless otherwise indicated).

⁴⁰ <http://www.nordiclbourjournal.org/nyheter/news-2017/article.2017-11-22.9090990271>

⁴¹ <https://www.fbu.org.uk/news/2018/12/20/firefighters-win-major-pension-legal-case-against-government>

The lack of impact from the social dialogue activities aimed at young people were also reported in the survey. Some direct views from the respondents indicate this further:

- In the words of respondent from Italy, “the policies and collective bargaining in favor of young people have not yet achieved concrete effective results that can adequately counter youth unemployment in our country, which has grown even more than in the pre-crisis years”.
- Another trade union from France remarked that “Some activities has led to significant improvement for young people but there is a general tendency in France toward little regard to social dialogue and restrictive framework to negotiations among social partners in general ... the significant attacks against public services in general and the public educational system through austerity and more oriented programs toward employability are leading toward less social mobility and more precariousness of young people.”

5.3 ACTIONS FOR THE MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH

Another area where trade unions have been active towards youth is providing outreach activities towards the most vulnerable youth. Outreach activities are typically considered to be activities aimed to inform young people, in particular, but not exclusively those who are regarded as ‘hard to reach’ and those facing multiple barriers, about the support available and steps to take to improve their lives. Such activities were reported by 80% of responding unions (see Figure 5.6).

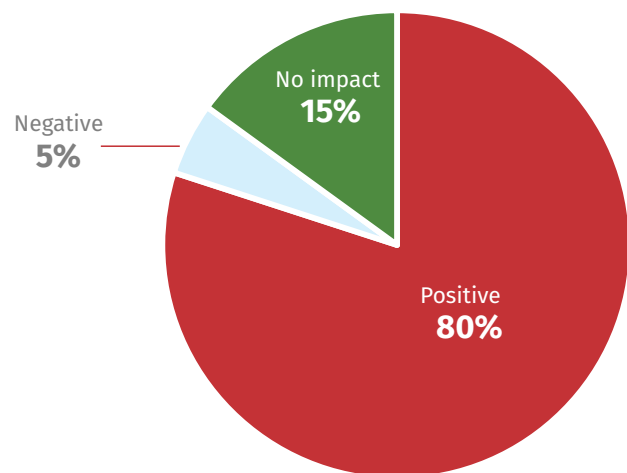


FIGURE 5.5: TRADE UNIONS UNDERTAKING OUTREACH ACTIVITIES TOWARDS THE MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH

Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=25.

Furthermore, the range of such outreach activities has been wide (see Table 4). Particularly widespread activities related to providing advice, guidance and information, using social media and building up alliances with civil society organisations, NGOs and youth clubs. This was reported by 17, 14 and 11 unions respectively. In contrast, activities such as actions to understand the needs and challenges facing the most vulnerable youth (e.g. research, mapping, stakeholder meetings) and participating in measures which are close to such vulnerable youth, such as mobile counselling units, young ‘ambassadors’, social work, street work were less frequently undertaken by the trade unions.

An example of such outreach activities has been highlighted in the experience of CISL union in Italy (see page 44).

**BOX 5.5: OUTREACH ACTIVITIES OF CISL UNION IN ITALY**

The CISL union in Italy is engaged in making visible the particularly acute NEET phenomenon in the country, in the negotiation of more advantageous rules and protections for fixed-term workers who see a strong presence of young people, in the necessary actions to strengthen the connection between the school world and the world of work particularly weak in the country.

Source: Online project survey.

TABLE 5.4: THE NATURE OF TRADE UNION ACTIVITIES TOWARDS MOST VULNERABLE YOUTH

ACTIVITY TYPE	PERCENT	COUNT
Providing advice, guidance and information about the possible future options and how your trade union can help them	89.5%	17
Using social media	73.7%	14
Building up alliances with civil society organisations, NGOs and youth clubs	57.9%	11
Providing physical spaces on your trade union premises for such young people to meet and get union advice	47.4%	9
Encouraging the local trade union members at the grassroots level to reach out to the most vulnerable youth	36.8%	7
Actions to understand the needs and challenges facing the most vulnerable youth (e.g. research, mapping, stakeholder meetings)	26.3%	5
Participating in measures which are close to such vulnerable youth, such as mobile counselling units, young 'ambassadors', social work, street work	21.1%	4
Other (e.g. Specific campaigns and services for students at work)	10.5%	2

Source: Online survey of ETUC members, 2019, n=25.

5.4 INTERNAL TRADE UNION ACTIONS FOR YOUTH**POTENTIAL REFLECTIONS FOR NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS:**

- Does your union have a specific youth strategy? If not, how could we design one?
- Does your union have a dedicated youth structure? How does that work in practice? How it should work ideally?
- How does your union has engaged with young people to understand their needs? What do we learn from that?

There have been a number of internal trade union actions highlighted in the project's research and exchange activities. They relate to a number of activities relevant to ensuring the voice of young people is heard within the unions.

To start with, trade unions are in need of **developing a strategic approach** to engaging young people and reflecting their needs. Here, ETUC itself is providing an example of developing a youth-specific strategy through its 2019 strategic document (see section 3). National affiliates could develop further their own strategic approaches addressing the needs of youth so that most ETUC affiliates have a youth-specific strategy.

A number of trade unions have also developed **internal youth-specific structures**, allowing the voice and needs of young people to be reflected in the participation, engagement and decision-making structures of the union. An example of such a dedicated well-developed union structure has been provided in Germany, where the trade union confederation DGB has a specific youth department.



BOX 5.6: DGB GERMANY YOUTH-SPECIFIC STRUCTURE – DGB JUGEND

DGB the national trade union confederation is formed of eight unions, each of which has a youth organization. DGB Jugend (the umbrella confederation organization for youth) has around 500,000 members till the age of 27, covering around 14% of the young workforce. Overall, the collective bargaining coverage achieved by DGB members is around 85%.

DGB Jugend works in the following way:

- A national bureau based in Berlin, consisting of a chairperson, specific issue leads (currently seven), financial officer, publications and three members of secretariat support. The bureau provides everyday support to the implementation of youth agenda in DGB.
- A national committee which is the main decision-making body on everyday basis, discussing the youth matters such as precariousness of work, study fees, or the lack of apprenticeship places. Currently, the committee consists of 35 members representing equally the eight unions members of DGB. The committee meets and exchanges on a regular basis to provide concrete implementation of various issues affecting the young workers and young trade unionists in DGB.
- A DGB Youth conference, taking place every four years where the young trade unionists meet and put forward the orientations and political directions for the DGB youth work for the next four years.

DGB Jugend has a specific formal statute outlining how it works, the various channels and ways of operations, representation and decision-making.

Over the years, DGB Jugend has developed a number of services oriented towards specifically young people, thus addressing their specific challenges in training, first job and beyond. This includes:

- Confidential and dedicated advice helplines for young people – on the wide range of questions relating to apprenticeships, traineeships or jobs;
- Online advice forum where young people can pose questions;
- Checks and quality approvals of the workplaces providing good-quality traineeships so that young people can be guided towards meaningful traineeship opportunities;
- Possibility to contact the closest DGB youth rep to the young person.

DGB Jugend also offers specific learning seminars and events for young trade unionists on a regular basis. Various topics of interest to young trade unionists are covered, reflecting their interests and needs. The learning experiences also help to provide platforms for young trade unionists to get to know each other and exchange experiences of union activism.

Further information: https://jugend.dgb.de/dgb_jugend/ueber-uns/wer-wir-sind/++co++5ff01d14-c61e-11e3-bffd-525400808b5c

Research has also shown a number of trade unions taking specific **actions to understand better the issues and challenges faced by the young people** in the workplaces of today. An example of this approach is provided by the TUC in the UK.



BOX 5.7: TUC, UK PROGRAMME OF INNOVATION AND RESEARCH TO UNDERSTAND THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Between 2016 and 2019, the TUC undertook a programme of research and innovation to explore how the union movement can better reach young workers. The union learned a huge amount about the context of young workers' lives, their attitudes, the barriers that stand between them and collective organising, their needs, the challenges they face at work, and what they would find appealing in a union offer.

Using this new-found insight, the Union's response was to develop WorkSmart – a career coaching app to engage young workers where they are and bring them on a journey to collectivism at work.

The key insights of the innovation programme are as follows.

- Traditional ways of reaching and organising workers are no longer succeeding for youth. Isolated campaigns are not bringing a new generation into the trade unions. And, while many unions are doing excellent work at a small scale to reach younger workers in new ways, this good practice is not commonly shared and applied.
- There is a gap in the union offer. In general, unions do not communicate that and how they are relevant to the lives, needs and aspirations of younger workers – which may differ significantly to those of older workers.
- There is a gap in engaging with young workers. In general, unions do not offer the kind of digital experiences young people are used to. For a generation who is digitally native, it's jarring to be handed a piece of paper to fill in to apply to become a union member, or to have to call an office when you move home to let them know your new address.

Further information: https://www.tuc.org.uk/sites/default/files/2020-01/WorkSmart_Innovation_Project_Report_2019_AW_Digital.pdf

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER ETUC ACTION

In the online survey, trade unions also expressed a number of ideas for further ETUC action to promote youth employment at the European and national levels. The following suggestions were put forward:

- Provide more visibility and awareness raising about the issues faced by young workers;
- Focus on the availability of apprenticeships; in the words of one trade union “The ETUC could ask the Commission and the European employers for more effective measures and resources to make apprenticeship the main channel of entry into the world of work for young people”;
- Better monitor the implementation of currently existing EU measures on youth employment;
- elaborate together with the national trade unions proposals for the strengthening of the protections and rights that young workers must enjoy, starting from training and relocation;
- Organize regular youth exchange of experience and regional workshops with the participation from other European trade unions;
- Focus on fighting precarious work of young people, empower trade union confederations to start including precarious workers in the trade union work.



06

WHAT ELSE COULD THE TRADE UNIONS DO FOR YOUTH?



POTENTIAL REFLECTIONS FOR NATIONAL TRADE UNIONS:

- How difficult is for your trade union to recruit young members? What different strategies have you tried? What do you think the optimal recruitment strategy should be?
- Have you got examples of successful campaigns your union ran for young people? Why was that a success?
- Have you developed new and attractive ways to communicate and reach young people in your trade union?
- Do you engage with other youth organisations or do you see them as rivals?
- How are youth organized in your trade union? Do you think this is working well?

6.1. YOUNG PEOPLE TEND TO STAY AWAY FROM THE TRADE UNIONS

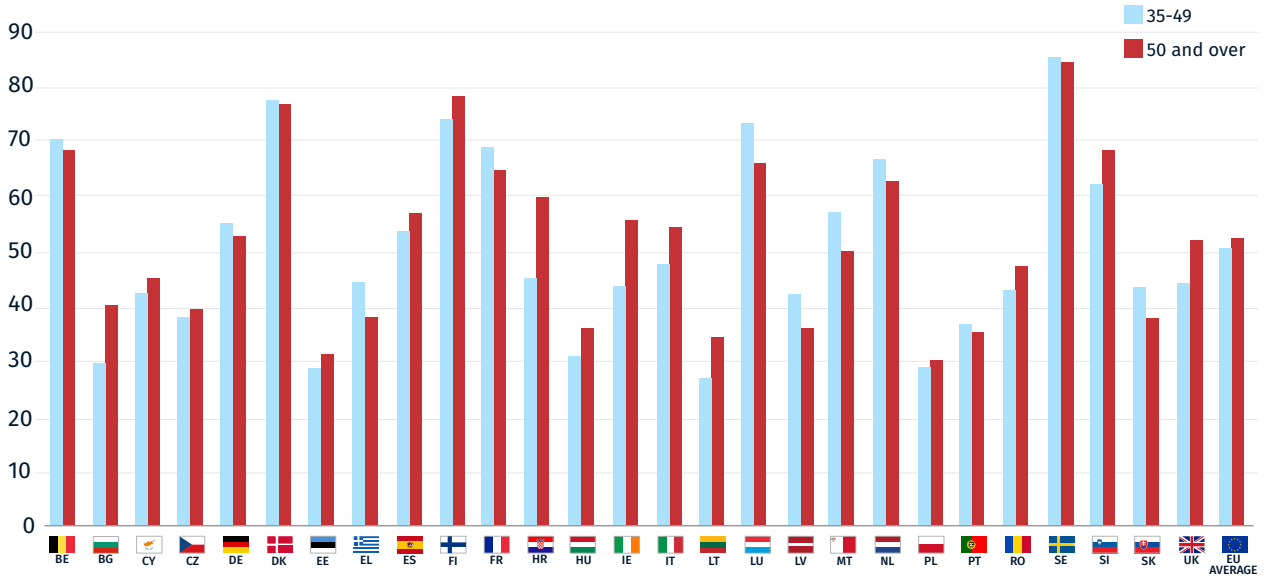
Over the last years, the membership in the trade unions across Europe has been in decline and many trade unions are losing their membership base. The percentage of employees paying a union fee has almost universally declined across Europe in recent decades. Moreover, the remaining unions' membership base tends to be older as many members are in their mid-40s to early 50s (see STYLE 2017). Among the different categories of under-represented groups in unions, young people are considered to be the most difficult to reach in this regard. Young workers tend to spend far longer moving between precarious jobs in the formative stages of their working lives and hence they are less likely to settle down in regular employment. Thus, they are also less likely to become aware of the trade unions in the course of these unstable working patterns. The high extent of precariousness of working conditions faced by young workers can affect their likelihood to become trade union members in several, opposing ways (Simms et al 2018):

- Young people experiencing long periods of precarious employment increasingly consider it too risky to organize via a trade union, for example, because their wages are contingent on getting favorable assessments from managers or because they live in constant fear of losing their temporary jobs;
- Young precarious workers may also be more likely to organize to act against the lack of paid employment ensuring their economic independence and stability.

As a result, unions' membership base is aging and increasingly concentrated in those sectors where stable jobs still dominate. This under representation of young people in trade unions is evidenced through a number of research findings.

To start with, young people are significantly less likely to be working for organisations which have a trade union representation, a works council or other body which represents workers (see Figure 6.1). This can be linked to the high extent of precariousness experienced by young workers, working for employers outside the formal and regular employment structures. Across the EU, only 40% of workers below 35 reported working for an organization with a trade union or another type of worker representation. For older workers, this figure was higher at 50%. Young workers exposure to trade unions is especially low in Greece, Lithuania or Poland where only 20% of young workers reported working for an employer with an organized worker representation body. In contrast, over 60% young workers in Sweden, Belgium, France and Finland working in such an organization.

FIGURE 6.1: YOUNG PEOPLE WORKING IN ORGANISATIONS HAVING A TRADE UNION, WORKS COUNCIL OR OTHER BODY REPRESENTING WORKERS

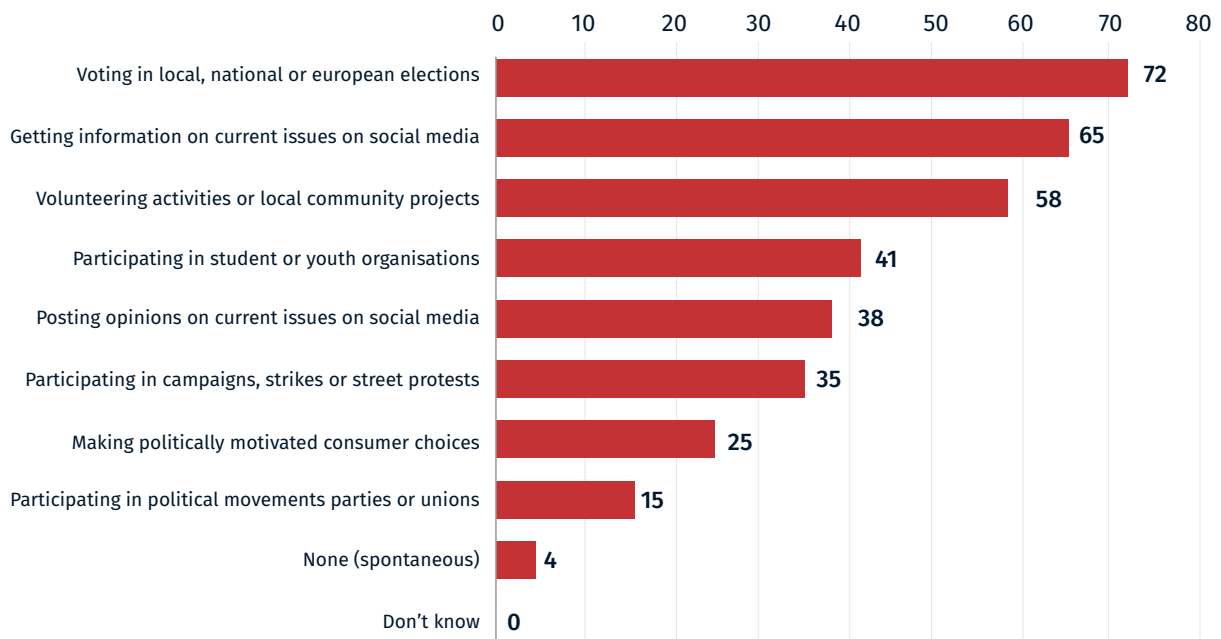


Source: Eurofound, EWCS 2015⁴², accessed 16/03/2020.

Furthermore, in 2019, Eurobarometer survey showed that young people are not inclined to become a member of the trade union (see Figure 6.2). All respondents were asked about their participation in a range of civic, social and political activities. The two most common activities these young respondents have taken part in are voting in local, national or European elections (72%), and volunteering activities or local community projects (58%). These are the only activities undertaken by at least half of all respondents.

Just over four in ten (41%) have participated in student or youth organisations, while almost as many (38%) have posted opinions on current issues on social media and 35% have participated in campaigns, strikes or street protests. One quarter (25%) have made politically motivated consumer choices, while **15% say they have participated in political movements, parties or unions**. This was ranging from 31% in Sweden and 23% in Ireland and Germany to 5% in Hungary and Estonia.

FIGURE 6.2: YOUNG PEOPLE PARTICIPATING IN CIVIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ACTIVITIES, 2019



Source: Eurobarometer 2019, No. 476

Base: all respondents (N=10,786)

⁴² <https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/data/european-working-conditions-survey>

By far the most common reason for not participating in volunteering, having a political engagement or getting involved in other forms of organized activities for your people is the lack of time (49%). More than one third (36%) say they are not interested, while 26% say they do not think these activities change anything. Almost one in five (17%) say they are not aware of these activities taking place. Respondents are less likely to say that they are too young (9%), or that nothing prevents them and they consider themselves an active citizen (6%).

Further research (STYLE 2017) showed that the low participation in formal political activities does not mean young people are not at all involved or interested in politics and the representation of their interests. However, young people perceived formal mainstream politics and traditional institutions as distant, difficult to understand and unresponsive to young people's needs. This perception also applies to trade unions where research has shown that many young people are not exposed to or aware of the role of unions and the labour movement in general (ETUI 2019). Often, they do not know much about the unions, their role and help which could be obtained from becoming a union member.

6.2. A RANGE OF FURTHER TRADE UNION ACTIONS FOR YOUTH

Project activities have also identified a number of activities which trade unions could take to respond more actively to the needs of young people, young workers and young trade unionists.

Union's strategic vision to engage young people

Trade union action for young people should be based on the overall strategic thinking on the union activity and future prospects for the workforce as a whole and young people in particular. The recruitment and retention of young people and addressing their needs in the union's agenda needs to happen as part of the overall union's strategic approach. This should be based on the internal analysis of the opportunities for and threats to trade union membership in its specific context, then identifying and making strategic choices on how, when and on which basis to engage with young people. Having youth specific union structures and the backing of the unions' leaders is critical to the development of youth-specific strategic approach, grounded in the realities of the youth in the union's context. ETUC's strategy the Future of Youth can provide important inspirations here.⁴³ Ultimately, a greater involvement of young people in union life and activities should form an essential part of a broad strategic vision on the future of unions.

On a practical level, several ideas have been highlighted in the research findings.

Identifying and developing bottom up union-led campaigns on the issues directly relevant to the core concerns of young people

Further research has shown a range of factors to reach out to young people by trade unions (Simms, Eversberg, Dupuy and Hipp 2018). Young people are attracted into union activities when the unions address not only their traditional concerns such as wages and the quality of training, but also the range of issues faced by young people often in precarious working conditions. This includes for example demands for better quality skills training, minimum working hours, and specific support in insecure employment situations.

A good example of this approach is the successful Dutch 'Young & United' campaign, which achieved the partial abolishment of the youth minimum wage (STYLE 2017). The campaign gave room to youth-led activism, direct youth-led action, giving young people the confidence that their own contribution could make a difference to achieving a better regulation of the labour market. Making heavy use of social media, this issue-based campaign seemed effective at tapping into youth networks by using a language, visuals and messages that appealed to young people; it presented a different public image of trade unions.

Based on case studies from France, Germany, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the research (Simms, Eversberg, Dupuy and Hipp 2018) has identified a number of successful approaches taken by these unions to organize young people, including:

- Targeted campaigns;
- Coalition building;
- Membership activism; and
- Training activities.

⁴³ <https://www.etuc.org/en/circular/etuc-youth-overarching-political-document-future-youth>

Simms et al 2018 has also shown that to be successful in organizing the young people, trade unions can combine a number of factors:

- Using the existing collective bargaining structures, when trade unions try to extend existing bargaining arrangements from their core areas of activity into fields of more precarious work faced by young workers. Further, where unions are already operating in the workplaces covered by institutionalized interest representation, unions can use these structures to specifically address the interests of less well-organized groups of young workers;
- Labor market conditions, where existing positive conditions of skills shortages mean that unions can attract young people without them necessarily facing the individual consequences of collective action;
- Support by union leaders and members as well as exchange of experiences so that trade unions observe and adapt successful tactics developed in other institutional and sectoral contexts.

Changing the communications structures and channels to reach young people

Unions could adopt better and more interactive communication policies and approaches for engaging young people. Their preference for social media can also provide strong opportunities for unions to mobilise and engage with young people. Thus, unions should as a matter of routine use in their daily activities tools such as social media, mobile applications and other communication channels where young people are present. The ways unions communicate to young people are also important, including more visual-based communications, as well as shorter, sound-byte and attention-grabbing pieces where the main message is presented in a clear and succinct way.

Engaging with youth organisations

For trade unions, it is also important to build alliances and partnerships with the civil society organisations representing young people. These alliances could act as catalysts for innovation or change in unions' framing of issues affecting young people, the tactics and approaches to engage young people also also organisational structures of unions dealing with young people. Fostering alliance-building between unions and relevant youth organisations, like student organisations, is also a relevant way to gain a better understanding of youth issues, including those outside the workplace.

Comparative analysis of the union experiences from the United States, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom shows how this has been done in practice (Cha, Holgate and Yon K. 2018). In these examples, young people and their representative organisations have been engaged in various forms of bottom-up union-led activism. This was used to address the needs of young workers, such as precariousness of first jobs and lack of representation. In these cases, unions have successfully recruited and included young workers, and used successfully partnerships with other social movements. The authors suggest that such emerging cultures of grassroots activism provide unions with a way of appealing to wider and more diverse groups of young people.

Changing the union representation and decision-making structures

Unions' organisational structures and predominant (decision-making) culture appear unattractive and unfavourable for youth participation in union democracy and action (STYLE 2017).

Unions could be more responsive to and knowledgeable about the aspirations, interests and needs of young people. One way of achieving this would be to experiment with participatory democracy and informal engagement around such issues as precariousness. Training and education via mentoring and union leadership development programmes could do even more to empower young unionists.

Indeed, researchers investigating several cases of unions developing specific structures and initiatives for their young members in France, the United Kingdom, and the United States (Hodder, Fullin, Kahmann and Sapre 2018). Their findings suggest that union support both from the management of the union leadership and financial and organization resources are very important to develop young worker initiatives, ensuring their proper resourcing and networking across the trade union organisations. This is especially critical when such youth-specific groups are newly formed and in need of mentoring, guidance and resource assistance. On the other hand, to sustain the interest and creative energy of young worker groups it is also important that the union provides them with sufficient autonomy and space for development.



07 SUMMING UP

Employment and social statistics show **significant challenges of accessing jobs for young people, as well as ensuring that such jobs are of good quality, pay decent wages and provide sufficient training and career development opportunities**. 12% of young people nowadays are neither in employment, education and training and this has declined only slightly in the last ten years. Young people are 2.5 times more unemployed compared to the adults – a trend which has persisted despite the economic recovery in the post-crisis Europe. The EU average masks large differences in youth unemployment between the countries. Youth unemployment is especially high in southern Member States of Greece, Spain and Italy. Young women and young migrants also face challenges in accessing jobs across Europe. When in employment, young workers experience precarious working conditions. Over 40% of young workers in the EU had temporary work contracts, compared to 12% of adult workers with such contracts. Furthermore, a significant proportion of young people were also working part-time although they did not wish so – this was 20% of all young part-time workers in 2018.

ETUC member trade unions have taken a range of actions to address the issues and challenges faced by young workers. The majority of unions have **negotiated collective agreements** specifically addressing also the challenges and issues faced by young workers. However, amongst these trade unions, the number of such agreements tended to be small as 20% negotiated below three such agreements in the last 5-6 years. The collective agreements negotiated by the trade unions also covering young workers included a wide range of topics of high relevance to young workers, pertaining to the traineeships (reported by 22 unions) and apprenticeships (24 unions), the working conditions and terms of employment (22 unions), and other issues (10 unions). 15 unions reported also negotiating collective agreements covering the issues of young migrants and young women. The collective agreements reported tended to be negotiated at the sectoral level and were universally applicable. Importantly, the majority of responding considered that these collective agreements had either very strong or some impact on young workers and young people in general.

Furthermore, **the majority of trade unions have also been engaged in other social dialogue activities where the issues of young workers were also covered.** This was reported by over 70% of the trade unions participating in the survey. In contrast, less than a third of unions did not participate in such activities. The range of issues and challenges tackled in these social dialogue activities was broad. The top three priorities reported by the trade unions related to the working conditions in employment (such as wages), followed by rules regulating traineeships and apprenticeships. In contrast, the social dialogue activities touched to a lesser extent issues relating to the work-life balance challenges faced by young workers. The most frequently occurring type reported by the majority of trade unions related to the soft type of social dialogue – i.e. discussion and exchanges of views on the issues relating to the young people. This was followed by a mix of social dialogue types used by the trade unions, which included frequently the development of legislation, policies and measures and joint actions aimed at young people. Overall, the majority of trade unions saw a positive impact of these social dialogue activities on young workers and young people in general.

Another area where **trade unions have been active towards youth is providing outreach activities towards the most vulnerable youth.** Outreach activities are typically considered to be activities aimed to inform young people, in particular, but not exclusively those who are regarded as 'hard to reach' and those facing multiple barriers, about the support available and steps to take to improve their lives. Such activities were reported by 80% of responding unions. Particularly widespread activities related to providing advice, guidance and information, using social media and building up alliances with civil society organisations, NGOs and youth clubs.

Project findings have identified **further areas of action for ETUC**, including more publicity and awareness raising of the issues faced by young workers, enhanced monitoring of existing EU level initiatives, as well as joint initiatives and exchanges of experiences between the national ETUC members.

A number of further actions which could be taken **by the national members of ETUC** have also been identified, relating to the need to have a strategic vision to engage young people, running bottom-up campaigns on issues directly relevant to young people, changing the communication channels, engaging with youth organisations and refreshing the internal trade union structures, organization and decision-making structures.

At the EU policy level, the EU level stakeholders need to acknowledge that the **Action Plan** for the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, adopted in March 2021⁴⁴, is missing important priorities for youth and requires further urgent action, both at the EU and national levels.

No new actions specific to addressing the challenges of young people in the EU are envisaged in the Action Plan. On the other hand, genuine new opportunities to address critical youth issues such as their over-representation in precarious work or the lack of youth access to adequate social protection are left out from the Plan.

Specific targets critical to the main challenges of young people are missing from the Plan. This gap particularly relates to an explicit target related to reducing youth unemployment and the numbers of youth in poverty and socially excluded. The reinforced Youth Guarantee misses a binding definition of quality standards for its support offers to the youth. In the implementation of ESF+, all Member States should dedicate a specific proportion of the funding to addressing youth in precarious working conditions. None of the Plan actions proposed in the social protection and inclusion area explicitly acknowledges the significant challenges faced by young people in accessing the current social protection systems across the EU, as they tend to be not adequately covered in the existing social security safety nets and thus more likely to “fall through the cracks”.

In this way, the future policy action should include a stronger youth-centric approach in the European Pillar of Social Rights and its Action Plan, including concrete and binding action to ensure that young people are indeed at the centre of green and digital transitions and path of economic recovery across Europe.

⁴⁴ [The European Pillar of Social Rights Action Plan | European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

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ANNEX 1: LINKS TO ACTIVITIES OF ETUC MEMBERS FOR YOUTH

COUNTRY	WEBLINKS
Belgium	http://www.cnt-nar.be/Home-FR.htm
Belgium	https://www.demografiefondsdemographie.be/
Denmark	https://www.co-industri.dk/files/2019-04/Industrial%20Agreement%202017-2020.pdf
Estonia	http://eakl.ee/moju-teemad/solmitud-kokkulepped http://eakl.ee/kokkulepped
Finland	https://www.sak.fi/en/working-life/agreements
France	https://www.fo-airbus-defence-and-space-toulouse.fr/apiv3/attachment/download/1320020/
Germany	https://jugend.dgb.de/
Poland	http://rds.gov.pl/rada-dialogu-spolecznego/uchwaly-strony-pracownikow-i-pracodawcow-rds/
Serbia	http://www.sindikats.rs/sekcija_mladih.html
Slovakia	www.ozkovo.sk/kzvs
Slovenia	http://www.pisrs.si/Pis.web/pregledPredpisa?id=ZAKO7512
Sweden	https://www.saco.se/saco-studentrad/
UK	https://www.tuc.org.uk/research-analysis/reports/missing-half-million
Turkey	http://www.turkmetal.org.tr/

Source: Project online survey.

ANNEX 2: ONLINE SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The online survey was developed in May-June 2019 with inputs from the project's Steering Group. It was launched in June 2019, and distributed to all ETUC members by the ETUC Youth Coordinator. The latest responses received were at the end 2019.

The survey aimed to:

- Collect up-to-date information on key social dialogue and collective bargaining actions for young people undertaken by trade unions at the national level;
- Identify good practices, successes and lessons learnt from the national affiliates of ETUC.

The survey consisted of mostly closed end questions with possibilities to provide open text responses. Not all respondents responded to all questions, hence, the answer counts to different questions vary depending on the number of responses received to that question.

As of January 2020, 51 responses to the survey were received, from 27 countries. Most active were the trade unions in the following countries:

- Sweden and Italy (6 and 4 responses);
- Belgium, Denmark, Hungary, Poland, and the UK (3 responses).

The responding trade unions were almost equally split between union confederations (28) and sectoral trade unions (23 unions). The respondents filling the survey came from a variety of trade unionist roles and positions:

- Chairpersons;
- Youth specialists, coordinators, presidents of youth sections;
- Youth representatives;
- Union secretaries;
- Collective bargaining experts;
- Regional organisers.

The full online survey questionnaire is included in the next pages.

About you

1) Your name:

2) Your position in the union:

3) Your email address:

4) Your telephone number:

5) Name of your union:

6) Is your union: trade union confederation / sectoral union, if sectoral which sectors do you cover:

7) Your country:

8) Do you agree that your response will be used by the ETUC in the context of this project?

Yes

No in this case, information about your union will be anonymised

About collective agreements including specific clauses on young workers negotiated by your organisation
 We would like to know about collective agreements negotiated by your union relating including specific clauses on young workers in the last 5 years.

Collective agreements are the outcomes of collective bargaining which is process of negotiations between the trade unions and employers, usually about the wages, terms and conditions of employment of employees, the rights and responsibilities of trade unions and other topics pertinent to the workers. This can be at sectorial, regional, or company level.

Please provide the following information.

9) Since 2014 how many collective agreements did your trade union negotiate which have provisions addressing specifically young workers?

If there are collective agreements before 2014 which significantly affect the situation of young people, please include such agreements in your response as well.

No such agreements

1 to 3 such agreements

4 to 6 agreements

7 to 10 agreements

Above 10 agreements

Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

10) The collective agreements that your union has negotiated since 2014 covering also young workers were mostly related to these issues:



	Traineeships	Apprenticeships or other dual training forms	Working conditions and terms of employment such as pay, working time	Work life balance measures	Other measures targeting specifically young women	Other measures targeting specifically young migrants	Other
Indicate the number of collective agreements on these issues since 2014	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____



Collective agreements about youth

Now, please select up to 3 key collective agreements which your union has negotiated for young workers since 2014. For each agreement, please provide the following information. Alternatively, if possible, you can send us the text of the collective agreements at the end of the survey or provide their weblinks.

11) Collective agreement 1:

	Your answer:
Title of the agreement	—
Which social partners negotiated it?	—
When was it negotiated?	—
When did it come into force?	—
Is it a new agreement or an extension of the existing agreement?	—
For how long <u>is it</u> applicable?	—
Is it applicable at company / sectoral / cross sectoral level regional / occupational levels?	—
If sectoral: which sectors are covered?	—
Is the agreement <u>is</u> universally applicable or only binding for the signatory parties?	—
Which key topic does it relate to?	—
What are the key provisions of this agreement for young workers?	—
In your opinion, what is the impact of this collective agreement on young workers and young people in general?	—
Other comments / your views:	—

14) In your opinion, what is the impact of these collective agreements on young workers and young people in general?

	Very strong impact	Some impact	Neutral	Minor impact	No impact
Collective agreement 1	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Collective agreement 2	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____
Collective agreement 3	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____

About other social dialogue activities on young workers of your organisation

Here, we want to know about other social dialogue activities – in addition to the collective agreements you described before – aimed at young workers, young women and migrants.

Social dialogue refers to the discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions involving organisations representing the social partners – employers and workers organisations.

15) Since 2014, has your trade union engaged in other social dialogue activities in which young workers were tackled specifically in some provisions?

yes

no

16) If yes, what were these activities (tick all that apply)

Traineeships

Apprenticeships or other dual training forms

Working conditions in employment

Work life balance measures

Measures targeting specifically young women

Measures targeting specifically young migrants

Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

17) Which types of social dialogue activities have been mostly aimed at young people?

- Development of new legislation / amending existing legislation
- Developing policies and measures aimed at young people
- Joint actions / projects aimed at young people
- Developing joint policy declarations, joint opinions, analyses, guidelines, codes of conduct, policy orientations
- Discussion and exchanges of views on issues affecting young people
- Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

18) What do think has been the impact of these social dialogue activities on the young workers and young people in general?

- Positive
- Negative
- No impact

19) Please explain your answer:

20) If not, why do you think this was the case? (tick all that apply)

- Other more pressing priorities within your trade union
- Lack of human resources within your trade union to work on this issue
- Lack of interest in this issue from employer organisations
- Lack of interest in this issue from the ministry and government
- Youth unemployment is already low in your country
- Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

21) Since 2014, has your trade union undertaken outreach activities towards the most vulnerable youth in your country?

Outreach activities are typically considered to be activities aimed to inform young people, in particular, but not exclusively those who are regarded as 'hard to reach' and those facing multiple barriers, about the support available and steps to take to improve their lives.

- Yes
- No

22) *If yes, what were these activities:*

- Building up alliances with civil society organisations, NGOs and youth clubs
- Providing advice, guidance and information about the possible future options and how your trade union can help them
- Providing physical spaces on your trade union premises for such young people to meet and get union advice
- Participating in measures which are close to such vulnerable youth, such as mobile counselling units, young 'ambassadors', social work, street work
- Using social media
- Encouraging the local trade union members at the grassroots level to reach out to the most vulnerable youth
- Actions to understand the needs and challenges facing the most vulnerable youth (e.g. research, mapping, stakeholder meetings)
- Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

23) *If not, why do you think this was the case? (tick all that apply)*

- Other more pressing priorities within your trade union
- Lack of human resources within your trade union to work on this issue
- Most vulnerable youth are already addressed by other stakeholders in your country
- Other - Write In (Required): _____ *

Additional information

24) Provide here the weblinks to your union's collective agreements / social dialogue activities:

25) *Please upload here any collective agreement texts or other relevant documents:*

_____ 1

26) What do you think the ETUC should do to further promote youth employment?

27) *Would you be interested in being informed about the future development of this project, the regional workshops and its final conference and being contacted to follow up the information you provided?*

Yes

No

Thank You!



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