



EUROPEAN

POLICY BRIEF

NEGOTIATE

Overcoming early job-insecurity in Europe

**Coordination of European strategies to tackle early job insecurity and youth unemployment:
Lessons from a comparative study**

Policy Brief no. 8 - February 2018

INTRODUCTION

NEGOTIATE – Overcoming early job-insecurity in Europe – is a research project centred on young people in Europe. It examines the long and short-term consequences of experiencing job insecurity or labour market exclusion in the transition to adulthood. NEGOTIATE moves beyond the state of the art by investigating the linkages between macro and micro levels in shaping the consequences of early job insecurity and labour market exclusion. A main objective in NEGOTIATE has been to analyse how adverse labour market conditions for young adults affect their scope for active agency on the pathway to adulthood, and how policy measures and strategies should be designed and delivered to best address the needs of young people in Europe. The project draws on a wide range of data. In addition to innovative use of secondary comparative data and in-depth policy analyses, the project has collected original data mainly using two different methodological approaches: 1) Semi-structured cross-national life course interviews with 211 individuals and 2) a cross-national survey of employers' risk assessment in the hiring of young workers based on a vignette design.

Despite early signs of economic recovery in Europe, youth unemployment rates, NEET rates and the non-standard forms of employment of young people are still high in many countries. Early job insecurity has even increased for some groups of young people in Europe. Low skilled, immigrant or ethnic minority background youth are still heavily affected, in spite of the policy initiatives adopted at the EU and national level to improve the situation of young people in the labour market. In most countries, young women are in a more vulnerable position in relation to the labour market than young men. Furthermore, for many of those who have experienced – or are still affected by early job insecurity – there are likely to be long-term scarring effects in the form of poorer employment prospects. Drawing on the evidence from the NEGOTIATE project this policy brief addresses the crucial question: *How can policies to integrate young people in the labour market be improved?*

MAIN FINDINGS, POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Divergences among European countries rise. This calls for an overall reassessment of early job insecurity in Europe. There is a need to rethink individualistic or narrow approaches in dealing with problems of integration in the labour market and to take into account the role of structural constraints that shape contemporary realities of early job insecurity across Europe.
- Job insecurity and labour market marginalisation is a threat to the economic, social and personal situation of young Europeans. High levels of unemployment, joblessness and economic uncertainty affects their objective and subjective well-being. Labour market insecurity is more detrimental to men than women. Social support, work dissatisfaction, level of education and employment commitment, work contracts and regional unemployment may moderate the relationship. Early job insecurity may cause stigma, welfare dependence and affect the self-esteem of young people.
- Entering the labour market in an economic downturn leads to scarring that exceeds a temporary setback with varying effects across educational groups and gender. When designing labour market regulations and active labour market policies (ALMP), there is a need to focus more on trajectories rather than on individual job spells, because the accumulation of insecurity in the labour market over time is essential to explain why some groups are more at risk of scarring than others.
- There is a need to distinguish between different forms of early job insecurity. Work in deskilling jobs, frequent changes of jobs or even ALMP participation can be detrimental to a young worker's professional career. Unemployment measures focusing on quick labour market reintegration of young unemployed people without consideration of job quality may not help or, worse still, may even reduce employability. This suggests that both 'skill-building first' and 'work-first' strategies may have an ambiguous or even negative impact on the long-term job prospects of young persons (depending on national context).
- The strong and persistent differences in national levels of youth job insecurity across Europe challenge the European Employment Strategy and European solidarity, e.g. leading to excessive use of migration as a strategy for coping with poor job prospects in the young person's own country, with uncertain gains for the person's long-term employment prospects.
- National public employment services need to carefully assess what measure seem appropriate in the individual case, given the person's prior skills and job experience, and the country's current labour market situation.
- Despite more or less common experiences during the Great Recession, none of the countries studied moved towards other transition regimes, nor towards an emerging "European Transition Regime". The EU needs to address the unrealised potential for policy learning and exchange of best practice between Member States in the context of the European Employment Strategy.

- The EU has good reason to safeguard the progress made and to keep encouraging Member States in several areas (e.g. by completing reforms like the already initiated Youth Guarantee), delivering comparable data to monitor labour market developments and stricter evaluation of the effectiveness and sustainability of the Youth Guarantee and other instruments.
- While continuing to support the Youth Guarantee in the coming funding periods of the European Social Fund (ESF), the EU needs to use financial instruments to promote a better balance between supply-oriented and demand-oriented measures in Member States
- Both the EU and Member States (at different levels of governance) need to recalibrate cash transfers and services supporting young women's and men's active efforts to improve their skills and prospects of finding secure jobs. Public agencies need to coordinate their approaches with those of civil society organisations to enable young people's own agency and to listen to young people's own views when developing new policies.
- The integration of social partners and other stakeholders in the design and monitoring of youth employment measures, but also in the VET systems, is crucial to both meet the needs of the economy and safeguard the quality of work and education, including fair wages.
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RESEARCH PARAMETERS

NEGOTIATE is a three-year EU funded project (EU contribution: € 2,476,609) exploring early job insecurity in Europe.

By involving stakeholders as well as young people themselves, we ensure that the questions most relevant to the policy community in each country and at the EU level have been addressed.

Research outputs from the project are presented in a series of Policy Briefs, a Working Paper series and peer-reviewed journal articles. Two books based on the project will be published in 2018.

More detailed accounts of this work are available on the project website: www.negotiate-research.eu.

PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME NEGOTIATE – Negotiating early job-insecurity and labour market exclusion in Europe

COORDINATOR HiOA – NOVA Norwegian Social Research
Oslo, Norway, www.hioa.no/nova

CONSORTIUM

NOVA Norwegian Social Research, Oslo and Akershus University College of Applied Sciences (HiOA NOVA), Norway

Institute of Labour and Economy, University of Bremen (IAW – UB), Germany

Brighton Business School, University of Brighton (UOB), United Kingdom

Institute for Public Policy and Social Work, Masaryk University (MU), Czech Republic

Department of Social Sciences, University of Basel (UNIBAS), Switzerland

Department of Economics, University of Girona (UDG), Spain

Department of Social Policy, Pantheon University of Social and Political Sciences (UPSPS), Greece

Department of Labour and Social Policy, Poznan University of Economics (PUE), Poland

Institute for the Study of Societies and Knowledge (ISSK), Bulgaria

SOLIDAR Foundation, Belgium

FUNDING SCHEME H2020-YOUNG-SOCIETY-2014, YOUNG-1-2014, Research and Innovation Action (RIA), Grant Agreement Number 649395

DURATION 1 March 2015 – 28 February 2018

BUDGET EU contribution: € 2,476,609. Total budget: € 2,919,233

WEBSITE www.negotiate-research.eu

FOR MORE INFORMATION Contact: Bjørn Hvinden, Scientific Coordinator, HiOA NOVA, <mailto:bjorn.hvinden@nova.hioa.no>