

D 10.5 – Policy synthesis and integrative report on Flexicurity

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**STYLE-WP10:
Flexicurity**

Version - 1.0

Submission date - Planned: 31/10/2016

Actual: 08/11/2016



STYLE Working Papers are peer-reviewed outputs from the www.style-research.eu project. The series is edited by the project coordinator Professor Jacqueline O'Reilly. These working papers are intended to meet the European Commission's expected impact from the project:

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To cite this report:

Villa, P., Leschke J. & Smith, M. (2016), *Policy synthesis and integrative report on Flexicurity*, STYLE Working Papers, WP10.5. CROME, University of Brighton, Brighton. <http://www.style-research.eu/publications/working-papers/>

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Acknowledgements

The research leading to these results has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement no. 613256.

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Abbreviations

ALMPs	Active Labour Market Policies
AT	Austria
BE	Belgium
BEPGs	Broad Economic Policy Guidelines
BG	Bulgaria
CSRs	Country Specific Recommendations
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DK	Denmark
EC	European Commission
ECB	European Central Bank
EE	Estonia
EES	European Employment Strategy
EL	Greece
EMCO	Employment Committee
EPL	Employment Protection Legislation
ES	Spain
ETUI	European Trade Union Institute
Eurofound	European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions
EU-SILC	European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions
FI	Finland
FR	France
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLs	Guidelines
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
ILO	International Labour Organization
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LFS	Labour Force Survey
LM	Labour Market
LMP	Labour Market Policies
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NEET	Not in Employment Education or Training
NRP	National Reform Program
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMC	Open Method of Coordination

PL	Poland
PLMPs	Passive Labour Market Policies
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

1. Objectives and main findings

This synthesis report summarises the main objectives and findings of each of the component tasks of WP10 with a focus on examining “flexicurity” as a policy approach for tackling youth joblessness in Europe, both in terms of the effects on employment levels for young people and the quality of their employment.

The ‘flexicurity’ concept is by definition controversial. At the core of the concept is the delicate balancing act between flexibility and security that underlines the difficulties in matching labour market security and flexibility simultaneously. Therefore, we have adopted a broad definition in order to analyse labour market policy and outcomes related to flexibility and security, rather than being constrained by specific definitions and controversies. In particular, we discuss finding a balance between social security, as one of the overlooked security dimensions of the initial concept, and the more widely implemented active labour market policies, and labour market flexibility, adopting a more nuanced approach here, with a focus on subjective insecurity and well-being rather than merely taking into account fixed-term employment and the role of employment protection legislation. As a concept Flexicurity in principle has much to offer young people in terms of protection against the insecurities they face in transitioning into secure forms of employment and future careers. However, the details and implementation of the delicate balancing act between flexibility and security means that there are significant risks for young people too, thus a thorough exploration of Flexicurity policies and outcomes is an essential task for the STYLE project,

The four tasks focused on the following themes:

- **Task 10.1:** Institutional configurations and related outcomes for flexibility-security across EU countries with a particular emphasis on social security.
- **Task 10.2:** The early labour market experience of young people with a specific focus on quality employment and the impact of the parental household.
- **Task 10.3:** How different so-called “Flexicurity systems” influence the level of objective and subjective insecurity and well-being experienced by young people
- **Task 10.4:** Exploration of the developments in employment policy making in the EU before, during and after the crisis with a particular focus on ‘flexicurity’ and youth

1.1 Institutional configurations and related outcomes for flexibility-security across EU countries

One of the challenges of implementing so-called Flexicurity policy has been its heterogeneous interpretation and application across countries. The balance of flexibility and security for labour market participants remains a central factor in determining labour market outcomes – particularly for young people. The definitional ambiguity of the concept helps explain why it was picked up so easily at the policy level across a wide variety of stakeholders and contexts, but it also explains how policies resulting in an overemphasis on (external) flexibility and employability, with little emphasis on job and income security, were developed.

Young people tend to accumulate negative flexibility outcomes in that they are at a greater risk of working on non-standard contracts and thus have limited contractual security; they also have shorter employment histories with more limited accumulation of firm-specific skills, making them prone to 'last-in first-out rules'. They are thereby at a greater risk of losing their jobs than the comparable adult population. Shorter employment histories and non-standard contracts also mean that young people have less income security including more limited access to unemployment benefits. The crisis further emphasised the risks of these negative outcomes on both flexibility and security dimensions.

In their study, Eamets *et al.* (2015) explore the inter-linkages between flexibility and security from multiple perspectives in order to uncover both the institutional configurations that contribute to different outcomes for young people and also the impact of the economic crisis and resulting policy changes. The study first develops a comprehensive mapping exercise of flexibility-security indicators and outcomes for European labour markets for both youth and the total labour market during the pre- and post-crisis periods. The mapping exercise shows that country groups with similar institutional settings do not necessarily have similar labour market and/or social outcomes for young people. This supports the hypothesis that institutional and outcome-type indicators of flexibility-security might not be correlated. These results suggest that there are a range of forces shaping outcomes on the youth labour market and within-cluster, and indeed within-country. In particular, the study shows that it is not possible to find one-size-fits-all model of social security and labour market flexibility. The variety of outcomes associated with similar institutional flexibility-security settings further underlines for policy makers and researchers alike that youth are far from a homogenous group.

Second, the study explores the evolution of income security measures on the labour market, with a special focus on unemployment benefits, for young people and their links with internal and external flexibility outcomes. External numerical flexibility is very high among youth, particularly the youngest group (15-24). Temporary contracts, frequently involuntary, allow youth to gain first-hand labour market experience, resulting in a trade-off between flexibility and security. Young peoples' over-representation in temporary employment implies that their employment fluctuates more than that of adults, rendering

youth more prone to unemployment. Furthermore, on average youth have shorter tenure than adults (due to “last in-first out” rules and an employer preference for employees with greater firm-specific skills). It follows that young peoples’ more limited labour market experience results in a greater difficulty fulfilling eligibility conditions for access to unemployment benefits. On the basis of LFS data, Leschke and Finn (2016) demonstrate that youth are also less likely to receive unemployment benefits than adults in almost all countries. This combination of higher contractual flexibility and unemployment, and lower income security during unemployment, can be termed a *vicious* relationship between flexibility and security for young people.

The third contribution of the first work package, authored by Maselli and Beblavý, underlines the importance of considering in detail the headline unemployment rates often used to highlight the plight of certain labour market groups such as young people. By using comparative LFS data, the results show the relative volatility of the labour market of workers below the age of 25, and in particular the 20-24 group. However, by comparing the unemployment ratio – the proportion of the population that is unemployed rather than the proportion of the active population that is unemployed – between youth and teen unemployment rates to those of prime-age individuals the picture changes and we find a greater level of stability or even an improvement over time. This suggests that based on this alternative measure the relative disadvantage of young people in the 20-24 group, compared to individuals of prime age, has in fact declined over the last 15 years (see Maselli and Beblavý 2015).

1.2 Quality of Outcomes

Debates on “Flexicurity” highlight concerns about balancing the security needs of labour market participants with pressure for flexibility driven by volatile product markets, international competition and greater uncertainty. However, policy makers in Europe, particularly in the years directly before the economic crisis, have tended to concentrate on promoting flexibility, with the security needs of participants given less attention. Given the rapidly rising unemployment rates among particular groups such as youth and non-standard workers, the first years of the economic crisis saw an increased emphasis on security dimensions including the promotion of active labour market policies and income security through short-time working measures and unemployment benefits. However, once austerity measures kicked in, the focus turned away from security concerns again and flexibility measures were returned to a high position on the agenda. The security dimensions underline the need to consider the quality of labour market outcomes for young people including subjective dimensions of (in)security as this has an important impact on their overall well-being.

The segmentation of young people into precarious labour market segments places them at greater exposure to non-standard contracts shown to increase feelings of subjective insecurity (Scherer 2009) while unemployment places young people, often with limited access to income security measures, at

further risk of subjective insecurity. However, the perception of insecurity will be influenced by the institutional context and the family situation in which young people experience precarious contracts and joblessness. We therefore examined how Flexicurity arrangements are able to moderate the effect of unemployment and insecurity on subjective well-being among young people while at the same time taking into account their household situation as an alternative source of security (Russell et al. 2015).

Using data from the European Social Survey (ESS 2004, 2010) – which contains measures of perceived insecurity, contract status, and outcome measures such as life satisfaction – we explored whether Flexicurity arrangements moderate the effect of unemployment and insecurity on subjective well-being among young people. We find some clustering of results by Flexicurity regime but results do not map neatly onto a Flexicurity regime. For example, there were no differences in well-being of employed and unemployed for young people across a wide range of regimes including those from Nordic, Continental, Eastern and Southern regimes. Likewise there was no clear link between Flexicurity regime and life-satisfaction. Indeed our results indicate that we have to go beyond welfare state institutions in our analyses and examine the household context and other factors that might generate resilience and impact upon well-being.

The extent to which country differences are better accounted for by variations in financial security, or better job prospects was also analysed. Here there were remarkably similar results for young people and adults. What was perhaps surprising here was that there were similar effects for employment protection regardless of contract and that the results for both age groups for unemployment spending were non-significant.

We also explored the employability dimension – in line with the original EC interpretation of Flexicurity strategy job prospects (EC 2007) – and found that investment in active labour market policies and the extent of unemployment seem to play a key role at the country level. Although according to the analysis for this work package there were no significant effects for unemployment benefits at the country level, there was an important role of income security accounted for by being in financial difficulty at the individual level and a strong positive impact of living at home with two parents. Here we observe signs of welfare at the household level potentially acting as functional equivalent of weak welfare state provision. Additionally, our analysis for the dualisation hypothesis confirms that the job security and labour market flexibility dimension is relevant in so far as strict employment protection (EPL) for regular jobs is associated with lower life satisfaction. This result holds both for youth and adults. Finally, we showed that results on the impact of “flexicurity systems” on the level of insecurity and its distribution across younger and older workers differ with the measure of security used. Contrasting results across subjective job insecurity, perceived employability (employment security) and an objective measure of job security based on contract type underline the complexity of the phenomenon, and re-iterate the point made in earlier studies that ‘permanent’ employment is not always associated with feelings of security. This observation is particularly pertinent in cross-national comparisons where there is variation

in employment protection for permanent workers. The subjective measures too have their weaknesses, and are likely to be influenced by expectations that are not independent of country-specific settings.

The quality of outcomes is also illustrated by the analysis of trajectories and the time it takes for young people to gain a secure permanent position on the labour market in D10.2. The analyses for this work package on the early labour market experiences of young people and their quality of employment relied on an innovative exploration of trajectories into secure employment providing a more detailed and nuanced perspective on simple job placements and exits from unemployment or inactivity. Using EU-SILC data Berloff *et al.* (2015) show the medium term trajectories of young people, over a period of five years, can be categorised into three successful outcomes (speedy, long search, in&out successful), two unsuccessful outcomes (in&out unsuccessful, continuously unemployed/inactive), and one where young people return to education. The country differences were stark across the 17 EU nations studied. For example, around four fifths of all young people experience 'speedy' trajectories in the Netherlands and Denmark compared to around a third in Greece and Italy. From a policy perspective the study shows a positive correlation between active and passive labour market policies (ALMP and PLMP) but a negative correlation with employment protection legislation (EPL). However, the data suggest that the current mix of ALMP and PLMP is not necessarily effective in helping young people entering the labour market and that new policy tools focused in providing access to relevant employment are required.

Furthermore the analysis of trajectories over the medium term demonstrates the risks of insecurity of low-quality employment experiences associated with temporary employment contracts. Underlining for policymakers the undesirable effects of encouraging temporary contracts when labour demand is weak. The analysis of the quality of young people's trajectories – using monthly and annual employment statuses, occupation, job changes, and earnings – illustrated the importance of the quality dimension to young peoples' labour market insertion. The results of this study suggest that just one in three young people have both employment and economic security (only 15% with what can be regarded as career employment) after five years, this despite more than half of young people being regularly employed and another 20% intermittingly employed.

1.3 Household and Class Divisions

The analysis for D10.2 by Berloff *et al.* (2015) also demonstrate the importance of considering the household context for young people when assessing and understanding their labour market trajectories. The results suggest that the trajectories of young people are affected by their household characteristics and that those coming from work-rich households – where two parents work – have better labour market outcomes in terms of employment than those from households with a single breadwinner. After controlling for individual characteristics such as age, gender and education, young people living in households where both parents are working, generally have a higher probability of employment and a lower probability of unemployment/inactivity, with some differences across country groups and over time. Those living with unemployed parents face a higher risk of being unemployed themselves. The econometric analysis shows that this remains generally true, even when one controls for individual characteristics.

There were important gender differences here for policy makers to note, working mothers have a positive effect on the integration into employment of their daughters and their sons but the effects differ between young women and men and across country groups. Living with a working father reduced the probability of not working in all country groups but this effect was weakened over the crisis period in Continental and Mediterranean countries. On the other hand, maternal employment has an additional, and often larger, effect than that of the father in Mediterranean and English-speaking countries. These results underline how family legacies have a longer-term impact on young people. Policy issues need to address not only the immediate situation affecting young unemployed people, but also how this is related to their parent's employment situation – both mothers and fathers.

The household analysis provides empirical evidence of an intergenerational persistence of worklessness and also the positive spill-over effects of promoting gender equality. In all country groups, having had a working mother increases the probability of a young person being employed and reduces the risk of being inactive: maternal employment has a positive association with the employment trajectories of their children, and often their daughters.

1.4 Policy Focus and Intensity

The analyses in D10.4 explored the changes in employment policy making in the EU over a period before and during the crisis and the early phases of austerity. As one of the first in-depth analyses of the country specific recommendations (CSRs) this work package explored one of the key ways in which the European Employment Strategy (EES) seeks to exercise its influence on member states policy. The analysis of almost 500 CSRs demonstrated the shifting policy models and the underlying implications

for youth in Europe. In particular the results showed a progressive shift of attention from gender issues towards older workers and then somewhat belatedly from older workers towards young people in order to reduce the risk of long-term unemployment arising from the crisis. Prior to the crisis concerns for young people in the CSRs were rather rare.

The focus on young people and their challenges on the labour market in the CSRs were not consistent either across countries or over time. The general recommendation to implement labour market reforms to enhance flexibility tended to be translated into the so called 'reforms at the margin' – an important area of policy making not directly targeted on young people, but with strong indirect effects for the segmentation. Subsequent reforms were supposed to rebalance flexibility with security but CSRs on Flexicurity were neither very numerous, nor straightforward. Furthermore the "youth-blind" approach meant that there was an absence of an explicit recognition of the actual and potential impact of policies on young people and in particular the risks of increasing segmentation.

A parallel analysis in D10.4 of the intensity and direction of policy activity by member states using the LABREF database of labour market policies illustrates how policy making changed both in intensity and focus throughout the period but with differences across country groups. The research identifies a rising intensity of policy making across the whole period analysed with a step change in activity as the EU experienced the first effects of the crisis and then again as austerity measures were implemented. There was a markedly higher level of policy making among those countries most affected by the crisis and under the close guidance of the Troika – in particular the Mediterranean group of countries stand out with a much high level of policy activity. In line with the policy recommendations the most policy activity was in the area of ALMP.

In line with the CSRs policy making towards young people was rather limited over the period analysed, accounting for around 10% of all policies covered by the LABREF database. As the CSRs the intensity of policy making aimed at young people also increased over the period, peaking in 2011-12. Again the Mediterranean group stands out with a greater level of policy activity on young people. The concentration of policy activity in the area of ALMP was more marked for young people. Indeed in the pre-crisis years there were only a few new measures and/or changes to existing measures that could be classified as Flexicurity measures in a small number of countries and focused on ALMPs. During the crisis, there was a shift with a rise in intensity in policy making focused on youth, almost all based on increasing employment security. A further shift occurred during austerity period when a greater diversity of policies was recorded, though policies that increase employment security still dominated for youth. In those years, there is evidence of a noticeable increase in measures reducing the three security dimensions: employment, income and job security.

2. Policy Themes

The research reported under work package 10 provides a number of important results in order to inform policy related to young peoples' experiences on the labour markets at the national and European levels. In particular, the findings and policy implications can be grouped around three key themes (i) Risks and Benefits of Flexicurity Policies (ii) Policy Development and Metrics and (ii) Policy Scope and Coherence

2.1 Risk and Benefits of Flexicurity Policies

The analyses presented in this work package underline the implicit trade-offs that are at the core of the Flexicurity model and how young people, if not considered explicitly, are at risk. These risks associated with these trade-offs are shaped by the institutional configurations and the protective role of the household in some societies. The high use of external numerical flexibility – temporary or short-term contracts – means that benefits accrue to employers and generate a greater level of volatility for young people and their employment levels. Thus overall young people tend to have worse flexibility-security outcomes, especially after the initial effects of the crisis; these negative consequences also exacerbate gender gaps in some countries. These results confirm that youth, similarly to other vulnerable groups on the labour market, do not experience the same wins that regular employees might gain from flexibility-security policies; youth seem to be at a particular disadvantage.

On the security side of the Flexicurity equation we find that youth are not only more prone to becoming unemployed, but are also less likely to have access to unemployment benefits. The apparent contradiction of this position is underlined by the mixed and incoherent responses of policy makers towards young people before, during and after the crisis: a number of European countries improved the security situation of youth in the first years of the crisis, but as result of policy changes and austerity measures we then saw that on average and in several countries both younger and older young people were worse off after the crisis.

Furthermore, our analysis underlines the risks of adopting a common policy framework across countries and labour market groups. EU-wide policies prescription requires careful consideration of the heterogeneity of institutional arrangements, composition of the labour market and the different securing role households, and in particular parents, play for youth across welfare settings. The results of the comparative analysis of labour market performance for young people underline the variety of outcomes – good and bad – across institutional settings and that there is no clear link between so-called Flexicurity regimes and performance. Furthermore these country differences are likely to persist. In spite of the

raft of policy making during the crisis, country clusters remain rather stable when we analyse them before, during and towards the end of the initial phase of the crisis.

We also demonstrate the heterogeneity within national labour markets. Youth is not a homogenous group and within countries and clusters we find variations in outcomes by age groups within the youth category and between young women and men. For example we observe an increase in NEET rates for age cohorts 20-24 and 25-29 for almost all country clusters and both gender groups yet NEET rates for 15-19 were relatively steady. Policy makers need to recognise that the youth labour market is frequently treated as a single homogeneous market but our results show a variety of experiences by gender, household and age cohort.

2.2 Policy Development and Metrics

Secondly, the results from this work package provide a number of useful pointers for the development and evaluation of policy. In spite of the criticisms of flexicurity as a concept the flexibility-security nexus remains useful for highlighting important dimensions of labour market and welfare institutions and for assessing complementarity of institutions. However, our results raise a number of questions about the applicability of institutional variables for the analysis of cross-country differences in labour market outcomes. The available institutional data are found to be particularly poor, for example with regard to the income-dimension of the flexibility-security matrix in relation to benefit coverage rates. This deficiency is particularly problematic for assessing the impact of policy changes promoted under the flexibility-security banner in the 2000s and since then under the Europe 2020 strategy.

Our analysis also questions the common reliance on standard measures of employment protection legislation (EPL) and underlines the need for improved measures to assess labour market regulation in a comparative context. This is particularly important when considering the impact of regulations on sub-groups of the labour market such as young people. Given the poor state of available measures, and the limitations of cross-sectional data, we propose the use of different specifications and alternative measures in order to try to take account of potential problems with the institutional variables where possible.

Similarly when it comes to outcomes unemployment ratios based on the entire population, as opposed to rates based on only the active population, complement other metrics in order to provide a more accurate picture of the labour market of youths. Closely linked to this point, our analysis on NEET rates underlines the need to consider a full range of metrics when analysing labour market performance and

outcomes for young women and men on the labour market. This includes measures of unemployment, NEET statuses and participation in education in order to fully understand the trends on the youth labour markets. There is a growing tendency among young people to stay in education rather than moving into employment, for example, with uncertainty on longer-term implications regarding integration into employment. This is one of the few metrics where we do not observe any gender differences.

Finally youth and teens cannot be looked at as a single group; we also need to differentiate older (25-29) and younger youth groups (15-19 and 20-24). There might even be a case to also consider the 30-34 year olds as part of the youth population as in a range of European countries this age group is still prone to experience labour market flexibility commonly associated with school to work and youth labour market transitions.

Effective policy development and evaluation requires that policy makers have the tools for a thorough understanding of the diversity of experiences on the labour market – by age and gender for example – and adequate means with which to evaluate the impact of policy measures.

2.3 Policy scope and Coherence

Adequate policy development also requires recognition of the complexities and inter-linkages of influences on labour market behaviours and outcomes. Our results underline the complexity and layers of influences within different national contexts and the need for the widest consideration of the impact of policy changes on individuals, households and labour markets in order to assess impacts. Policy makers thus need to give careful consideration to the scope of policies for their intended, and unintended consequences.

Furthermore, the variety of results across and within policy “regimes” further demonstrate the complexity of policy changes and the limits to transferability of prescriptive measures towards national labour markets, for example employment protection legislation. It is thus vital to consider the legacy of previous policy actions and the coherence. Our detailed analysis of policy recommendations and implementation suggests that the scope and scale of the focus on young people is linked to the institutional history around youth policy as well as the impact of the economic conditions. There are a few countries with some tradition for youth policy that were able to develop policy incrementally and refine their ‘swimming technique’ in the choppy waters of the changing policy environment. While other countries faced with more turbulent waters created by severe economic situation and a weaker institutional history and were more characteristic of ‘splashing around’ in the shifting waters of the European economic and policy environment. Our analysis points to the need for a long-term and

coordinated policy perspective in order to address challenges faced by young women and men entering the labour market in Europe.

Coherence of labour market policy also extends to the wider impact of labour market policy on other stated goals linked to social and economic development. A thorough gender-mainstreamed approach to policy is required in order to both recognise gender gaps among the youth population identified in the research presented here and reduce the risk of future gaps in order to promote more gender-equal outcomes. Furthermore, given the centrality of labour market policy to the well-being and life satisfaction of EU citizens, it is important that institutional measures applicable to various populations groups – young and old, men and women, etc. – are enhanced to improve the analysis of policy measures promoted at the EU and national level. In this way the consequences of labour market policy on both economic outcomes and on well-being and life satisfaction can be taken into account in policy planning and implementation and in evaluation by researchers and policy makers.

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WP5 MISMATCH: SKILLS AND EDUCATION

A Comparative Time Series Analysis of Overeducation in Europe: Is there a common policy approach?

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WP6 MISMATCH: MIGRATION

Return Migration after the crisis Slovakia and Estonia

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WP7 SELF-EMPLOYMENT AND BUSINESS START UPS

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Country Reports

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Work-poor and work-rich families: Influence on youth labour market outcomes

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Leaving and returning to the parental home during the economic crisis

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Family formation strategies, unemployment and precarious employment

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WP9 ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Value system shared by young generations towards work and family

Hajdu and Sik (2015)

[STYLE Working Paper WP9.1 Searching for gaps: are work values of the younger generations changing?](#)

The impact of youth unemployment on social capital

O'Higgins and Stimolo (2015)

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Aspirations of vulnerable young people in foster care

Hart, Stubbs, Plexousakis, Georgiadi and Kourkoutas (2015)

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Seelieb-Kaiser et al. (2016)

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Policy synthesis and integrative report

Angie Hart, University of Brighton Niall O'Higgins, University of Salerno and International Labour Office Martin Seeleib-Kaiser, University of Oxford Endre Sik, TARKI Social Research Institute (2016)

[STYLE Working Paper WP9.5](#)

WP 10 FLEXICURITY**Mapping Flexicurity Performance in the Face of the Crisis: Key Indicators and Drivers of Youth Unemployment**

Eamets, Beblavý, Bheemaiah, Finn, Humal, Leschke, Maselli and Smith (2015)

[STYLE Working Paper WP10.1 Mapping flexibility and security performance in the face of the crisis](#)

NEW Tracing the interface between numerical flexibility and income security for European youth during the economic crisis

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[STYLE Working Paper WP10.3 Balancing Flexibility and Security in Europe: the Impact on Young People's Insecurity and Subjective Well-being](#)

Flexicurity Policies to integrate youth before and after the crisis

Smith and Villa (2016)

[STYLE Working Paper WP10.4 Flexicurity Policies to integrate youth before and after the crisis](#)

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www.buinesseurope.eu

ETUI: European Trade Union Institute

www.etui.org

European Youth Forum

www.youthforum.org

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

www.eurofound.europa.eu

ILO: International Labour Office

www.ilo.org

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

www.oecd.org

OSE: Observatoire Sociale Européen

www.ose.be

SOLIDAR: European network of NGOs working to advance social justice in Europe

www.solidar.org

EurActiv

www.euractiv.com

European Commission, DG Employment, Social Affairs & Inclusion

<http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=1036>

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