



# EUROPEAN POLICY BRIEF



## Vulnerable Voices and Cultural Barriers: Attitudes & Aspirations

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### INTRODUCTION

Too often the voices of young people are neglected in the analysis of youth labour markets. Little account of their attitudes and aspirations is given to understand how these determine labour market outcomes and influence the values attached to work.

Do work values differ between birth cohorts? How does unemployment and outsidership affect young people’s social and political attitudes? What is the nature of the work aspirations of vulnerable young people and which major obstacles do they face in realising them? These are some of the questions examined in this work package that focused on the attitudes and aspirations of young Europeans from a diverse range of backgrounds.

### EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

The analysis of work values between birth cohorts highlighted the lack of significant differences among them regarding the centrality of work, employment commitment and extrinsic or intrinsic work values in evaluating a job.

A second line of investigation sought to identify the systematic effect of individuals’ labour market status on their behavioural trust and trustworthiness, i.e. their social capital. The analysis highlighted the importance of distinguishing amongst different types of NEETs. Precariousness in employment was found to have severely damaging consequences for young people’s trust. Temporary employment appears to be at least as damaging to young people’s behavioural trust as unemployment.

The third research area aimed to understand the work aspirations of a group of vulnerable young people in foster care and the barriers they face in terms of finding work. A co-produced resource was developed and implemented. The approach was brought to life through interactive activities that carers, young people and professionals can use in support of promoting resilience for young people in care. Through their work the young people shared stories and role models that had been significant in supporting their own resilience,

such as Malcolm X and other celebrities, alongside telling their own personal stories; such stories are illustrated for the benefit of other young people using this media. The resource details the young people's pathways through foster care and the resilient moves that have been important in their lives in overcoming barriers to success. Members of the project team have used the resource in numerous training and conference presentations. The book was also exhibited in an art, play therapy and theatre studio in Greece.

The final task examined Youth Labour Market Outsiderness (YLMO) in Europe. The prevalence and dimensions of YLMO vary considerably across Europe. Institutional arrangements can significantly impact on its prevalence, the support available for young outsiders as well as their political and social participation. With respect to social participation we did not find significant differences among the various groups of young people, with the exception of young people in education showing a higher level of social participation. Concerning political participation our quantitative analysis highlights the overall lower rates of formal political participation by young people, with no significant differences for YLMOs. However, for Italy and Spain a comparatively higher level of political participation by YLMOs was observed. We speculate that this might be the result of youth labour market outsiderness having become 'normal'/'standard' situation for a large part of the young population, which in turn provides the basis for a shared identity, facilitating the formation of and participation in political movements.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. Generational differences: a myth

The generational differences in relation to work attitudes often referred to in public debates and in political discourses are myths. Therefore, EU or national policies should not fail because of generation specific cultural deviations. If we accept that work values have significant impact on values in general, then the stable nature of work values across the generations provides policy-makers firm ground to act.

However, we did find some differences in work values by age and period, as well as between two groups of eastern and western European countries, so we should be aware that generational stability does not mean full-scale similarity.

The high level of commitment to employment in the youngest cohorts suggests that employment-generating policies can be important to help the young enter into the labour market; at a later stage of the career, policies to develop alternative non-employment forms can be more useful.

### 2. Youth unemployment: an insufficient focus

A sole focus on the dimension of unemployment is insufficient to analyse the labour conditions and their impact on young people in Europe. Youth labour market outsiderness and/or precarious employment can have similar effects as unemployment. The implication is that the increasing diffusion and promotion of flexible employment is likely to have long-term negative consequences for young people's labour market attachment. The negative effects of precariousness in employment will affect young people's social capital. This provides a further reason for doubting the efficacy of temporary employment forms as a means to promote the long-term stable employment of young people.

### 3. Institutions matter

Institutional arrangements affect the prevalence of labour market outsiderness. The deleterious effects on social capital of specific unemployment and unstable employment are of more concern in some countries and contexts than others – interventions need to be targeted to suit local circumstances. Future (EU) youth policy initiatives should have a stronger element of institutional capacity building in order to facilitate their effectiveness in countries with comparatively weak institutions in the domain of school-to-work transitions and youth policy in general.

#### 4. Co-production of research: implications for policy and practice

Including young people with complex needs as co-researchers should be encouraged, as it can lead to research that more readily reflects the realities of young people's lives. Policy makers and practitioners should take note that tackling youth unemployment from a resilience-based approach, that takes into consideration all aspects of the young person's life, can increase the likelihood of change. It also emphasises the importance of working at an individual and social level to tackle youth unemployment, rather than solely focusing on the individual. Co-produced resources, such as the One Step Forward book, can be valuable tools for use in training practitioners (for example social workers, teachers, psychologists, therapists and nurses), as well as foster carers. The resources are available to download from: [http://issuu.com/boingboingresilience/docs/one\\_step\\_forward\\_-\\_resilience/1](http://issuu.com/boingboingresilience/docs/one_step_forward_-_resilience/1) (UK edition) [http://issuu.com/boingboingresilience/docs/one\\_step\\_forward\\_-\\_resilience\\_-\\_gre/1](http://issuu.com/boingboingresilience/docs/one_step_forward_-_resilience_-_gre/1) (Greek edition).

### RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The analysis of work values between birth cohorts (task 1) was based on the analysis of pooled data from the World Values Survey/European Values Study (WVS/EVS), the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) and the European Social Survey (ESS) between 1980 and 2010.

For task 2, broadly representative groups of young people were invited to participate in experimental sessions implemented in three European countries, Hungary (Budapest), Italy (Naples) and the UK (Oxford). Young people (aged 18-29) were drawn from outside the usual university background. In doing so, the task was innovative in several respects, as it is relatively unusual to undertake experiments on the general population, rather than university students. Moreover, the experiment was one of the first to look at the effects of labour market status on behaviour. The only precursor we are aware of is the experimental work reported in Fehr et al. (2003). A second treatment used in the experiment further sought to test the extent to which – and in which direction – subjects' trusting and trustworthy behaviour is affected by the information on the labour market status of their counterpart.

Adopting a Youth Participatory Action Research approach (YPAR) the focus of task 3 was to build the capacity of fifteen young people in Greece and England, enabling them to identify the issues they faced in relation to unemployment, and to consider helpful strategies to overcome them. They acted as young researchers to further understand the nature of the issues, and were supported to develop a resource that would be useful to other young people, foster carers and practitioners. The young people themselves developed highly illustrated multi-media resources. The One Step Forward resource begins by supporting everyone to understand the concept of resilience and the benefits of adopting a resilience approach. The approach is brought to life through interactive activities that carers, young people and professionals can use in support of promoting resilience, that is available in English and Greek.

The final task took a mixed-method approach to examining Youth Labour Market Outsiderness (YLMO) in Europe. The conceptualization of YLMO used the standard employment relationship as a reference point (Mückenberger 1985; Standing 2009). Accordingly, a person would be considered an outsider if their employment is not full-time, or not permanent, or does not lead to financial independence. This definition broadens the employment dimension of labour market outsidersness to include inactivity, as well as atypical employment. We analysed data from the EU Statistics on Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) to shed light on the extent and types of YLMO in different European countries and on the complex association between YLMO and key outcome measures for young people. These quantitative analyses were complemented by a review of the relevant institutional structures in Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK and by 134 semi-structured interviews with young people and experts in each of the country cases.

## PROJECT IDENTITY

<b>PROJECT NAME</b>	Strategic Transitions for Youth Labour in Europe (STYLE)
<b>COORDINATOR</b>	Prof. Jacqueline O'Reilly, University of Brighton, Brighton, United Kingdom J.O'Reilly@brighton.ac.uk
<b>CONSORTIUM</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Centre for European Policy Studies, Brussels, Belgium</li><li>• Copenhagen Business School, Copenhagen, Denmark</li><li>• Cracow University of Economics, Cracow, Poland</li><li>• Democritus University of Thrace, Komotini, Greece</li><li>• Economic &amp; Social Research Institute, Dublin, Ireland</li><li>• EurActiv, Brussels, Belgium</li><li>• Grenoble School of Management, Grenoble, France</li><li>• Institute for Employment Studies, Brighton, United Kingdom</li><li>• Institute for the Study of Labour, Bonn, Germany</li><li>• Koç University Social Policy Centre, Istanbul, Turkey</li><li>• Metropolitan University Prague, Prague, Czech Republic</li><li>• National University of Ireland Galway, Galway, Ireland</li><li>• Norwegian Social Research, Oslo, Norway</li><li>• Slovak Governance Institute, Bratislava, Slovakia</li><li>• Swedish Institute for Social Research, Stockholm, Sweden</li><li>• TARKI Social Research Institute, Budapest, Hungary</li><li>• University of Brighton – BBS CROME, Brighton, United Kingdom</li><li>• University of Graz, Graz, Austria</li><li>• University of Oviedo, Oviedo, Spain</li><li>• University of Oxford, Oxford, United Kingdom</li><li>• University of Salerno, Salerno, Italy</li><li>• University of Tartu, Tartu, Estonia</li><li>• University of Tilburg, Tilburg, Netherlands</li><li>• University of Trento, Trento, Italy</li><li>• University of Turin, Turin, Italy</li></ul>
<b>FUNDING SCHEME</b>	FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Collaborative project. SSH - ACTIVITY 8.1: GROWTH, EMPLOYMENT AND COMPETITIVENESS IN A KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY, Area 8.1.2 Structural changes in the European knowledge economy and society - SSH.2013.1.2-1 Overcoming youth unemployment in Europe.
<b>DURATION</b>	March 2014 – August 2017 (42 months).
<b>BUDGET</b>	EU contribution: €4 999 056.
<b>WEBSITE</b>	<a href="http://www.style-research.eu">www.style-research.eu</a>
<b>FOR MORE INFORMATION</b>	Contact: John Clinton, University of Brighton – J.M.Clinton@brighton.ac.uk
<b>FURTHER READING</b>	Hajdu and Sik (2015) <a href="#"><i>Searching for gaps: are work values of the younger generations changing?</i></a> , STYLE Working Papers, WP9.1, University of Brighton, Brighton O'Higgins and Stimolo (2015) <a href="#"><i>Youth Unemployment and Social Capital: An experimental approach</i></a> , STYLE Working Papers, WP9.2 Hart et al. (2015) <a href="#"><i>Aspirations of Vulnerable Young People in Foster Care</i></a> , STYLE Working Papers, WP9.3 Seelieb-Kaiser et al. (2016) <a href="#"><i>Young People as Outsiders: Prevalence, composition and participation</i></a> , STYLE Working Papers, WP9.4 Hart et al. (2016) <a href="#"><i>Policy synthesis and integrative report</i></a> , STYLE Working Papers, WP9.5