



YOUNG PEOPLE: THE LABOUR MARKET AND TRADE UNIONS

**Research prepared for the Youth Committee of the European Trade
Union Confederation.**

Amparo Serrano Pascual and Jeremy Waddington

May 2000

Amparo Serrano Pascual is a Senior Researcher at the European Trade Union Institute.
Jeremy Waddington is a Senior Lecturer at the Industrial Relations Research Unit,
University of Warwick and a Project Co-ordinator at the European Trade Union Institute.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	2
1. YOUNG PEOPLE AND LABOUR MARKET	3
1.1 Demographic Trends, Education and Participation of Young People in the Labour Market	3
1.2 Employment Trends	7
1.3 Job Structure	13
1.4. Types of Transition of Young People into the Labour Market	16
2. YOUNG PEOPLE AND TRADE UNIONS	20
2.1. The Pattern of Unionisation among Young People	20
2.2. Explaining the Pattern of Unionisation	24
2.3. Why Do Young Workers Join or Remain Apart from Trade Unions?	28
2.4. How are Trade Unions Encouraging Young Workers to Join and Participate?	34
CONCLUSIONS	40
REFERENCES	41
FOOTNOTES	44

INTRODUCTION

Following the end of the long post-war boom during the late 1970s, the process of labour market restructuring accelerated throughout much of Western Europe. Employment shifts away from manufacturing towards private sector services were accompanied by rising levels of unemployment. The intensification of international competition led employers to seek new forms of labour flexibility, which resulted in greater insecurity for workers. Young workers were particularly adversely affected by these developments, sustaining higher rates of unemployment than the rest of the labour force and exposed to higher rates of insecurity arising from atypical forms of employment.

Trade unions are also adjusting to the process of global economic change. Nowhere has this process of adjustment been more difficult to enact than in the recruitment, organisation and representation of young workers. Unionisation rates among young workers have fallen throughout most countries of the European Union (EU) and the number of young trade unionists serving as union representatives has declined sharply. The objective of this report is to chart these processes of decline, to identify the reasons that underpin them and to examine how trade unions in EU member states have responded to them.

To these ends the report comprises two sections. The first section charts the shifts in the labour market participation of young people. It identifies the relations between employment, unemployment and participation in education, locates employed young people within the labour market and specifies the form of their contracts of employment. The first section thus isolates those features of the labour market participation of young people which trade unions will need to exploit if they are to reverse the pattern of decline.

The second section examines the pattern of unionisation among young workers in Europe and the different explanations of changing unionisation rates. In addition, it assesses the reasons for joining provided by young trade unionists. A review of the measures implemented by trade unions to attract more young workers into membership is also provided. This report is based on information from existing research as well as from specific data and information gathered from many ETUC affiliates.

1. YOUNG PEOPLE AND LABOUR MARKET

1.1 Demographic Trends, Education and Participation of Young People in the Labour Market

In most European countries there are relative declines in the percentage of young people in the population. This trend is particularly stark in Denmark and Germany, as shown in Table 1. The 15-24 age group is falling in most EU member states. This trend, however, is not found in Ireland, Portugal and Spain, where the percentage of young people continues to be important. The demographic boom experienced in Europe did not reach these three countries until the 1970s. Therefore, these countries currently have a higher proportion of young people in their population.

TABLE 1
THE PRESENCE OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE EUROPEAN POPULATION

	Total population (000s)	Population aged 15-24 years (000s)	Percentage of population aged 15-24 %
BELGIUM	10,171	1256	12.3
DENMARK	5,929	642	10.8
GERMANY	80,919	8,732	10.8
GREECE	10,289	1,419	13.8
SPAIN	38,982	6,295	16.1
FRANCE	57,117	7,219	12.6
IRELAND	3,605	637	17.7
ITALY	56,803	7,986	14.1
LUXEMBOURG	420	48	11.4
THE NETHERLANDS	15,431	1,886	12.2
AUSTRIA	7,913	921	11.6
PORTUGAL	9,950	1,597	16.1
FINLAND	5,124	626	12.2
SWEDEN	8,854	1,047	11.8
U.KINGDOM	58,041	6,829	11.8
EUROPEAN UNION	368,878	47,140	12.8

Source: Labour Force Survey 1998.

The fall in the percentage of young people in the population is matched by an increase in the level of school attendance by young people. Young people tend to stay in education for longer. This tendency is especially significant in Finland, the Netherlands and Denmark, as shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2
EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE BY COUNTRY, 1997

	Young people aged 15-24 in education %	Young people aged 15-19 in education	Young people aged 20-24 in education
BELGIUM	67.1	94	41
DENMARK	66.5	84	51
GERMANY	67	93	39
GREECE	58.5	82	32
SPAIN	61.9	81	45
FRANCE	68.6	93	44
IRELAND	56.6	81	28
ITALY	55	77	36
LUXEMBOURG	61.1	92	35
THE NETHERLANDS	64.3	81	49
AUSTRIA	55.9	83	32
PORTUGAL	56.5	74	40
FINLAND	70.6	90	50
SWEDEN	64.5	90	43
U. KINGDOM	47.4	71	24
EUROPEAN UNION	60.6	83	38

Source: Labour Force Survey 1998.

Attendance of initial training courses by young people between 15 and 19 has increased. This trend is particularly marked in Belgium, Germany, France and Luxembourg. It is considerably lower in the United Kingdom, standing at 71 per cent for those under 20 years old. For young people in the 20-24 age group, the percentage varies from highs of 51 per cent in Denmark and 50 per cent in Finland to a low of 24 per cent in the United Kingdom. The percentage of young people with initial training or who are continuing their studies has increased, although this increase has been minimal in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries (where it was already high) and the United Kingdom (where the percentage has remained low). The increase is particularly significant in Spain, Belgium and France. Whilst most young people in the Netherlands¹ and the Nordic countries are well educated, in some countries, including Spain, the situation has become somewhat polarised. There is a relatively high proportion of young people who have only completed

the compulsory part of secondary education, but there is also a high proportion of young people in higher education (Fina 1999).

The average level of education among young Europeans is considerably higher than among older people and particularly higher than that achieved by older women. In 1997, around 70 per cent of women aged 25-29 had completed education at least up to the upper secondary level, while a little more than 50 per cent of women aged 40-49 had similar qualifications (Eurostat 1997).

Because of the fall in the size of this age group as a proportion of the overall population and due to the increase in the rate of inactivity resulting from the longer time spent in education, the number of young people who become economically active is decreasing. Young Danish people are the exception in retaining a particularly high rate of labour market activity. The Netherlands and United Kingdom also have relatively high rates of activity among young people. At the other end of the scale, Belgium, France and Luxembourg have the lowest rates of activity, which is partly due to the prolonged period of time young people spend in education.

The fall in participation in the labour market reflects the increased number of young people who remain in education. The activity rate for young people is therefore significantly lower than the overall activity rate, as is illustrated by Table 3.

TABLE 3
PARTICIPATION IN THE LABOUR MARKET, 1999

	Overall activity rate (15-64 years) %	Activity rate of young people (under 25 years) %
BELGIUM	64.6	32.9
DENMARK	80.6	73.3
GERMANY	71.2	50.8
GREECE(1)	62.5	40.0
SPAIN	62.2	41.4
FRANCE	68.8	36.1
IRELAND	66.4	50.8
ITALY	59.6	38.1
LUXEMBOURG	63.1	34
THE NETHERLANDS	73.6	67.7
AUSTRIA	71.6	58.4
PORTUGAL	70.9	47.6
FINLAND	76.4	63
SWEDEN	76.5	42.3
UNITED KINGDOM	75.1	62.9
EUROPEAN UNION	68.6	47.3

Source: Labour Force Survey 1999, Statistic in Focus 5/2000, Theme 3.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

In Belgium, France and Luxembourg the activity rate for young people is almost half as low as the overall activity rates. At the other extreme, the activity rate of young people in Denmark, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom is relatively close to the overall activity rate.

1. 2 Employment Trends

Young people are particularly concerned by the crisis in the labour market. This crisis has quantitative and qualitative dimensions. On one hand, young people face high unemployment. The average unemployment rate of young people has risen and the employment rate has fallen. This rate is particularly high in comparison with other age groups in almost all countries in Europe. Nevertheless this situation varies widely from country to country.

**TABLE 4:
SITUATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE BY COUNTRY, 2000**

	Unemployment rate %	Youth unemployment %
BELGIUM	8.6	20
DENMARK	4.1	5.6
GERMANY	8.8	8.9
GREECE (1)	10.8	29.7
SPAIN	15.1	28.3
FRANCE	10.3	23
IRELAND	5.8	7.3
ITALY	11.1	32.4
LUXEMBOURG	2.6	5.3
THE NETHERLANDS	2.7	4.7
AUSTRIA	4.2	5.6
PORTUGAL	4.2	7.7
FINLAND	10	22
SWEDEN	6.4	12.4
UNITED KINGDOM	5.9	12.7
EUROPEAN UNION	8.8	16.9

Source: Labour Force Survey, 2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Some EU member states have experienced an increase in the number of jobs, especially the Netherlands, where the base-line level of unemployment was not particularly high. Although Spain has experienced a very favourable change in the employment situation over the last two years, its level of unemployment remains one of the highest in the EU.

Employment in the EU has increased during recent years. However, the decline in unemployment has been modest for women under 25. The participation rate of young women has fallen more than that of men.

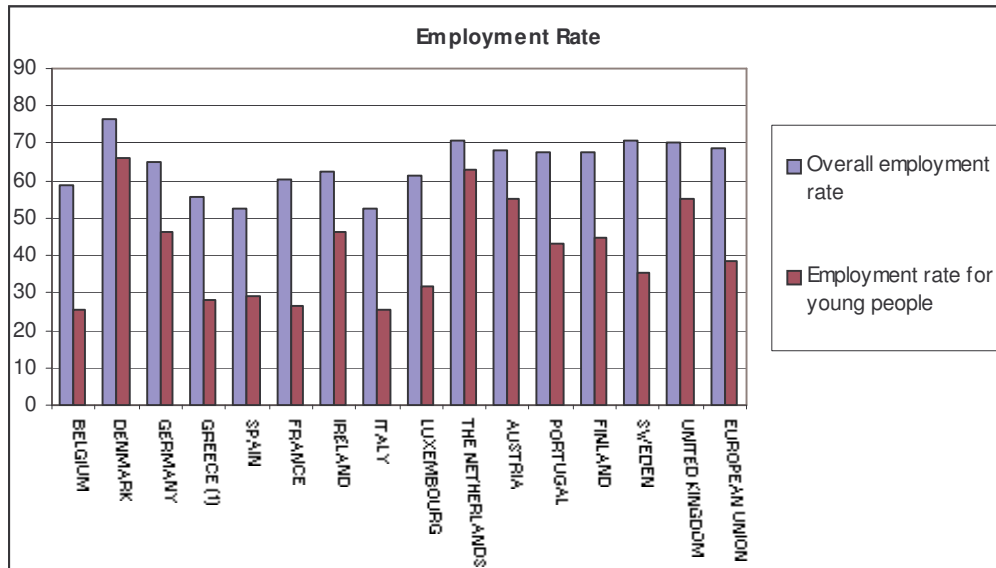
TABLE 5
EMPLOYMENT RATE, 1999

	Overall employment rate %	Employment rate for young people %
BELGIUM	58.9	25.5
DENMARK	76.5	66
GERMANY	64.8	46.2
GREECE (1)	55.6	28.1
SPAIN	52.3	29.2
FRANCE	60.4	26.5
IRELAND	62.5	46.5
ITALY	52.5	25.5
LUXEMBOURG	61.6	31.7
THE NETHERLANDS	70.9	62.7
AUSTRIA	68.2	54.9
PORTUGAL	67.4	43.3
FINLAND	67.4	45
SWEDEN	70.6	35.4
UNITED KINGDOM	70.4	55
EUROPEAN UNION	68.6	38.7

Source: Labour Force Survey 1999, Statistics in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Figure 1

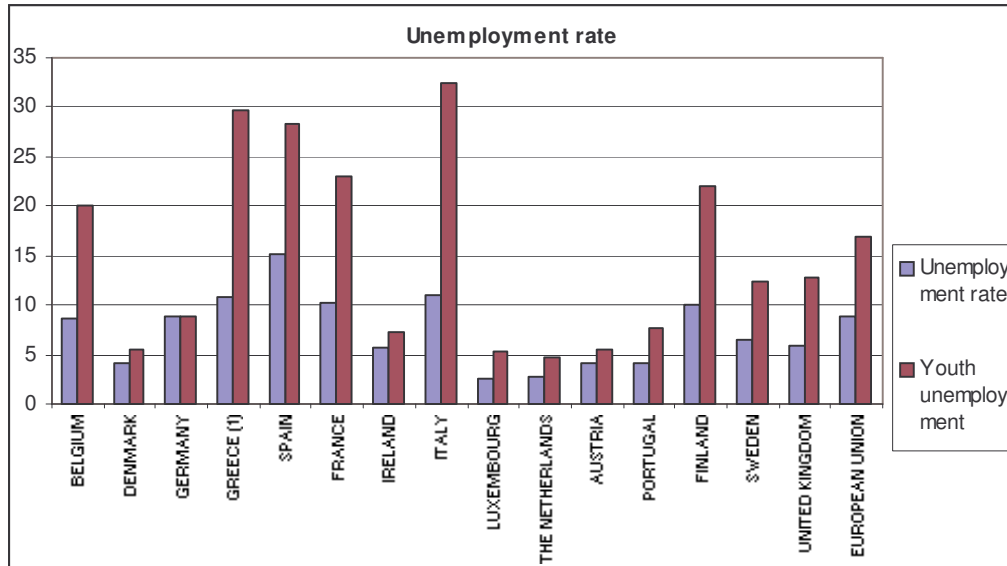


Source: Labour Force Survey 1999, Statistics in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Youth unemployment has declined over recent years. This is partially explained by more young people remaining in education. Nevertheless youth unemployment in Europe is almost twice as high as adult unemployment, with an average level of 16.9 per cent for the EU as a whole (Eurostat 2000). Various reasons explain the high incidence of unemployment among young people: segmentation of the labour market; technical and organisational changes that have created a demand for higher qualifications; and the labour market crisis coupled to tougher conditions under which workers are employed. These conditions particularly affect newcomers to the labour market, such as young people. The overall unemployment level in these countries largely explains the seriousness of the youth unemployment problem, which tends to be higher in those countries where overall unemployment is also high (see Figure 2). Likewise, although youth unemployment levels mirror fluctuations in the overall unemployment rate, they rise more sharply than the overall rate in times of recession and fall more rapidly in periods of economic growth. The incidence of unemployment among young people is not the same in all European countries. In Italy, Greece and Spain, for example, it is particularly high.

Figure 2



Source: Labour Force Survey, Eurostat, news release, n.28/2000.

The rate of unemployment among young people does not fully reflect the extent of the problem. Figure 2, for example, does not show the qualitative deterioration of working conditions in the EU countries, particularly Spain and the United Kingdom. Although young people are better qualified, most young people still find it difficult to find work, and even when they are successful, they often have only temporary contracts and to undertake tasks that do not correspond to their qualifications. Many young people experience precarious conditions of work (falling wages, considerable insecurity, poor employment prospects, and the impact of atypical forms of work). The integration of young people into the labour market at the present time is characterised by intermittent employment, high turnover rates and prolonged uncertainty. The general labour market crisis has placed serious obstacles in the path of young people who are trying to find regular employment. In addition to high levels of unemployment, young people attempting to enter the labour market rapidly discover that most of the jobs on offer are insecure and characterised by continually worsening working conditions. The problem is therefore not confined to a lack of job opportunities, but also includes the nature of the social and occupational sectors into which young people are moving. Moreover,

inequalities among and within the youth population have increased considerably in most countries.

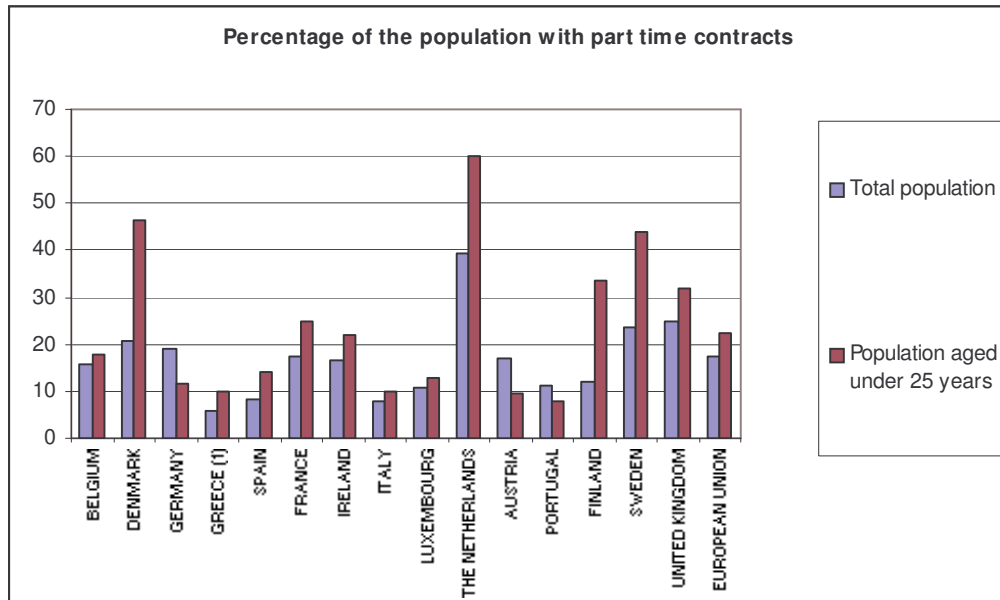
Table 6
Atypical forms of employment

	Fixed term contract %		Part time contract %	
	Total population	Population aged under 25 years	Total population	Population aged under 25 years
BELGIUM	10.3	37.5	15.7 (1)	17.9 (1)
DENMARK	10.2	29.7	20.8	46.4
GERMANY	13.1	53.1	19	11.5
GREECE (1)	13	25.8	6.0	9.8
SPAIN	32.7	70.1	8.3	13.9
FRANCE	14	54.3	17.2	24.9
IRELAND	9.4	17.2	16.7	22.1
ITALY	9.8	26.2	7.9	9.8
LUXEMBOURG	3.4	17.4	10.7	12.9
THE NETHERLANDS	12	33.3	39.4	59.9
AUSTRIA	7.5	31.2	16.8	9.7
PORTUGAL	18.6	39.5	11	7.7
FINLAND	18.2	52.1	12.2	33.4
SWEDEN	13.9	42	23.8	43.8
UNITED KINGDOM	6.8	12.5	24.8	32.1
EUROPEAN UNION	13.2	39.1	17.6	22.4

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1999, Statistic in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Figure 3



Source: Labour Force Survey 1999

The increased frequency of part time working and temporary contracts are two features of labour market developments in almost all EU member states (see Table 6 and Figure 3). Moreover, the additional jobs created in recent years have predominantly been part time and temporary ones. The number of part-time workers is particularly high and, in many cases, these people are not working part-time by choice. Another trend across these countries is the concentration of problems (such as, unemployment and deteriorating working conditions) among particular groups of young people (ethnic minorities, those who have dropped out of education, women and people living in certain urban areas). For instance, unemployment among young women has not fallen in most European countries since 1994.

1.3 Job Structure

The emergence of the post-industrial society has been followed by important changes in the structure of the labour market, particularly the growth of the service sector. The job structure has changed markedly, with a shift towards a tertiary economy and significant declines in the agricultural and industrial sectors. EU member states are all witnessing an

increasing importance of the tertiary sector and a reduction in manual labour. Table 7 illustrates the distribution of employment by industrial sector.

Table 7
Distribution of Employment by industrial sector.

	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
BELGIUM	2.4	25.8	71.8
DENMARK	3.3	26.9	69.8
GERMANY	2.9	33.8	63.3
GREECE	17.8	23.0	59.2
SPAIN	7.4	30.6	62
FRANCE	4.3	26.3	69.4
IRELAND	8.6	28.5	62.9
ITALY	5.4	32.4	62.2
LUXEMBOURG	2	22	76.1
THE NETHERLANDS	3.2	22.3	74.5
AUSTRIA	6.2	29.8	64
PORTUGAL	12.6	35.3	52.1
FINLAND	6.4	27.7	65.9
SWEDEN	3	25	72
UNITED KINGDOM	1.6	26.1	72.4

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1999, Statistic in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Over 66 per cent of the population is employed in the service sector. This sector is particularly important in Luxembourg, the Netherlands and United Kingdom. It is least important as an employer in Portugal, Greece and Ireland. The development towards a tertiary economy is reproduced among young people, as Table 8 shows.

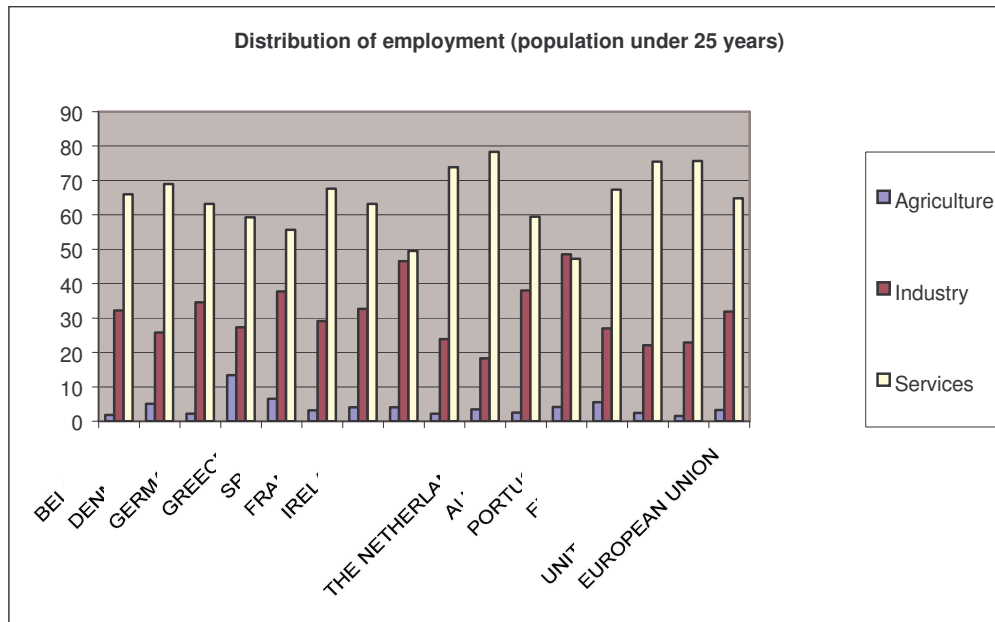
TABLE 8
DISTRIBUTION OF EMPLOYMENT AMONG THE POPULATION UNDER 25
YEARS.

	Agriculture %	Industry %	Services %
BELGIUM	1.8	32.2	66
DENMARK	5.1	25.8	69
GERMANY	2.2	34.6	63.2
GREECE	13.4	27.3	59.3
SPAIN	6.5	37.8	55.7
FRANCE	3.2	29.2	67.6
IRELAND	4.1	32.7	63.2
ITALY	4.1	46.5	49.5
LUXEMBOURG	2.2	23.9	73.9
THE NETHERLANDS	3.4	18.3	78.3
AUSTRIA	2.5	38	59.5
PORTUGAL	4.2	48.5	47.3
FINLAND	5.5	27	67.4
SWEDEN	2.4	22.1	75.5
UNITED KINGDOM	1.5	22.9	75.7
EUROPEAN UNION	3.3	31.9	64.8

Source: Labour Force Survey, 1999, Statistic in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

FIGURE 4



Source: Labour Force Survey, 1999, Statistic in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000.

In short, in most European countries the level of unemployment is particularly high among young people, even where their situation has improved over the years. Furthermore, young people are economically inactive for longer periods of time. Combined with a demographic fall in the proportion of young people in some countries, this has resulted in a reduction in the percentage of young workers in the labour market.

Although young people in most of the countries examined here are particularly vulnerable in the labour market, the situation is worse in Southern countries. This explains the particularly high levels of unemployment and inactivity there, especially among women. In the Netherlands, United Kingdom and Nordic countries on the other hand, the level of activity is particularly high among young people, and the levels of youth unemployment are particularly low.

1.4. Types of Transition of Young People into the Labour Market

Although there is a tendency to consider young people as one single and homogeneous group, there are significant differences between the situation of young people according to their geographical and social background, as is illustrated by Table 9.

TABLE 9

	B	FR	L	FI	PB	DN	AL	AU	ES	IT	GR	P	UK	IR	SW
Educational attainment for young people (15-19 years old)	H	H	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	L	M	L	L	M	H
Educational attainment for young people (20-24 years old)	M	M	M	H	H	H	M	M	H	M	M	L	L	L ¹	H
Activity rate	L	L	L	H	H	H	M	M	M	M	M	H	A	M	L
Employment rate	M	L	L	M	H	H	M	H	L	M	M	M	H	M	M
Unemployment rate	M	M	L	H	L	L	M	L	H	H	H	H	M	M	M

Notes:

1. H: high rate of participation of young people.
2. M: close to the average participation of young people.
3. L: low rate of participation of young people.

By reference to four parameters (educational attainment, activity rate, employment rate, unemployment rate), it is possible to classify the situation of young people in the labour market in the EU into five principal groups.

First group of countries: BELGIUM, FRANCE and LUXEMBOURG. These countries have a high enrolment rate in the educational system and a low labour market activity rate. The employment rate for young people is also quite low. The transition of young people into the labour market in this group of countries is characterised by a high level of social welfare and one of the highest levels of schooling in Europe. In contrast to the second group, however, the labour market for young people in France is characterised by high rates of inactivity and unemployment.

Second group of countries: The NETHERLANDS, DENMARK AND AUSTRIA. These countries share with the first group a prolonged period in school until relatively advanced ages. But contrary to the first group of countries, the activity and employment rates for young people are particularly high and the unemployment rate is very low. Young people in this second group have in common with the fourth group of countries a high labour market activity rate, but are better educated and trained, and benefit from the greater importance given to the social role of the state. These countries (with the exception of Austria) have a very high proportion of people working on part-time contracts. Access to the labour market is relatively quick and safe, but varies widely in nature, depending on the young person's social background.

Third group of countries: SWEDEN and FINLAND. Young people in these countries have a high educational rate and a quite high activity and occupational rate, although it is considerably lower than in the second group. The unemployment rate is quite high in comparison with the second group and many young people are working with a part time contract.

Fourth group of countries: PORTUGAL, UNITED KINGDOM and IRELAND. Young people belonging to this group of countries enjoy a high rate of labour market participation and a high level of employment, although they spend less time in education than in other European countries². They are in a relatively favourable situation because of the low rates of unemployment. The small number of long-term unemployed makes finding work relatively easy. However, the working conditions of the available jobs are characterised by a high degree of insecurity arising from the advanced deregulation of the labour market. The United Kingdom is, therefore, an example of a country with rapid and easy access to work but also of very poor employment conditions.

Fifth group of countries: ITALY, GREECE AND SPAIN. This group has a high unemployment rate and a rate of activity and occupation close to the European average. Young people belonging to this group have particular difficulties in finding employment. In contrast to the situation in the first and the second groups, the social role of the state is

relatively undeveloped. This partly explains the acuteness of the problem and the insecure and uncertain nature of the transition from school to work for young people in the Southern countries.

2. YOUNG PEOPLE AND TRADE UNIONS

Recent estimates suggest that the aggregate unionisation rate in the EU declined from 43 per cent in 1975 to 32 per cent in 1995 (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000). The rate of this decline was uneven with the result that in 1995 the difference between the most densely unionised country – Sweden at 83.0 per cent – and the least unionised country – France at 9.1 per cent – widened. The range of unionisation rates in EU member states is now wider than at any time since 1945. There are thus marked differences in the resources available to union movements to confront the challenges arising from the recruitment, organisation and representation of young workers.

It should be noted that, in contrast to the data on labour market participation, the quality of the data covering young workers in trade unions is very uneven, regarding the different definitions of ‘young’, whether the data apply to the level or the rate of unionisation, and the country coverage. A concerted attempt to ‘map’ the location of young workers in trade unions in Europe could usefully commence with the compilation of a consistent data series for each EU member state. The data presented below are drawn from labour force surveys, information compiled by academics and material supplied by representatives of organisations affiliated to the European Trade Union Confederation.

2.1. The Pattern of Unionisation among Young People

Table 10 illustrates the membership levels and/or rates of unionisation among young people in six countries. Irrespective of the variation in the available data, two points are immediately apparent. Firstly, the rates of unionisation among young workers are lower than among their older counterparts. In the Netherlands and Great Britain, for example, the unionisation rate among the youngest age category (15-24 years in the Netherlands;

16-19 years in Great Britain) is less than half of the rate of the older or aggregate category. The only exception to this position is Ireland, where recent economic expansion has resulted in a sharp growth in employment and union membership. This growth has also stimulated an increase in the number of young trade unionists. The rate of increase among young trade union members in Ireland, however, was almost 10 percentage points lower than the aggregate rate of increase.

Secondly, the rate of unionisation among young workers is declining faster than that among older workers. In Great Britain, the Netherlands and Sweden, for example, rates of decline appear to be inversely related to age. Although the available data do not allow comparison with other age groups, it is also apparent that the decline in the level of membership among young workers in Germany is very steep. Between 1988 and 1997 unions affiliated to the *Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund* (DGB) lost no fewer than 609,407 young members or 55.2 per cent of the young membership. The extent of the loss of young trade unionists is greater if the impact of unification is taken into account.

TABLE 10

THE PATTERN OF UNIONISATION AMONG YOUNG WORKERS

A: Denmark (1994)

Age	White-collar %	Skilled %	Unskilled %	Total %
20-25 years	82	98	71	84
26-35 years	84	93	94	88
36-45 years	86	96	98	90
46-60 years	84	96	94	88
All	84	96	95	88

Source: Scheuer 1996.

B: Germany

Year	Number of Young Members	As a Proportion of DGB membership %	Change on previous year	Change on previous year %
1988	1,103,440	14.15	-44,477	-3.88
1989	1,067,153	13.58	-36,287	-3.29
1990	1,046,986	13.19	-20,167	-1.89
1991	1,350,590	11.25	+303,604	+29.00
1992	1,170,659	10.63	-179,931	-13.32
1993	986,750	9.59	-183,909	-15.71
1994	817,485	8.37	-169,265	-17.15
1995	654,373	7.00	-163,112	-19.95
1996	573,151	6.39	-81,222	-12.41
1997	494,033	5.73	-79,118	-13.80

Source: Gewerkschafts-report, Institut der Deutschen Wirtschaft.

C: Great Britain

	1989 %	1998 %
Union density (all) 16-19 years	15	6
Union density (all) 20-24 years	30	14
Aggregate union density (all ages)	39	30
Union density (men) 16-19 years	16	8
Union density (men) 20-24 years	31	14
Aggregate union density (men)	44	31
Union density (women) 16-19 years	15	4
Union density (women) 20-24 years	28	13
Aggregate union density (women)	33	28

D: Ireland

	15-24 years (000s)	24-44 years (000s)	45-64 years (000s)	65 or more years (000s)	Total (000s)
1992	205.1	484.1	192.6	7.6	889.4
1993	198.7	500.5	201.6	7.1	907.9
1994	205.4	523.1	210.5	6.0	945.0
1995	220.5	551.7	220.3	6.7	999.2
1996	219.8	584.2	241.4	7.9	1053.3
1997	233.6	603.2	249.3	8.6	1094.8
Change	28.5	119.1	56.7	1.0	205.4
% change	13.9	24.6	29.4	13.2	23.1

Source: Central Statistics Office, Labour Force Survey.

E: The Netherlands

Year	Union Density 15-24 years %	Union Density 25-44 years %	Union Density 45-64 years %
1994	15	27	32
1995	15	27	32
1996	13	26	32

Source: Enquete beroepsbevolking.

F: Sweden

	16-24 years %	25-29 years %	30-44 years %	45-64 years %	Total 16-64 years %
1987	62.7	83.2	86.3	87.8	82.4
1988	60.4	80.9	85.8	87.6	81.4
1989	58.6	79.4	85.3	87.5	80.7
1990	56.3	77.7	84.7	87.6	80.0
1991	56.4	76.6	84.2	87.5	79.9
1992	62.2	79.7	86.2	88.5	82.9
1993	62.4	80.6	86.3	89.1	83.9
1994	60.0	81.2	86.1	89.3	93.8
1995	57.7	79.9	85.8	89.1	83.2
1996	55.7	79.4	85.2	88.8	82.8
1997	53.4	78.4	84.4	88.8	82.2
1998	49.5	77.2	83.5	88.9	81.3
1999	46.7	75.6	83.5	88.6	80.6

Source: Kjellberg 2000.

It is also noteworthy from Table 10 that the rates of unionisation among all age groups in Denmark and Sweden are higher than elsewhere. This is due to the role undertaken by trade unions in the administration of unemployment benefit or insurance, an approach known as the Ghent system.³ Workers in these countries join trade unions in order to gain access to unemployment benefits. High rates of unemployment, as experienced by young workers, are thus not as damaging to unionisation rates in countries in which the Ghent system operates as they are elsewhere. However, the Swedish data in Table 10 illustrate that the rate of unionisation among young workers is declining even though the Ghent system is maintained. Similarly, recent research conducted by the *Landsorganisationen* (LO) in Denmark suggests that between 1990 and 1996 the proportion of young people (16-25 years) organised by unions affiliated to the LO declined by 0.3 per cent (IRS 1997). Underpinning these declines are reforms to the Ghent systems and tax arrangements. Young Swedish white-collar and commercial workers have increasingly joined an unemployment insurance fund, and opted out of union membership. This practice became more widespread when workers' contributions to unemployment insurance funds were raised (Ahlén 1994). Tax exemptions for union contributions were also eliminated in Sweden, thus raising the cost of trade unionism. In Denmark young workers rights to full unemployment benefits were curtailed from April 1997 with the result that declines in membership among young workers were expected. Particular circumstances to Denmark and Sweden thus contribute to the recent declines in the unionisation rates of young workers in these two countries.

2.2. Explaining the Pattern of Unionisation

A wide variety of explanations have been advanced to explain the decline in the level or rate of unionisation among young workers. For our purposes these explanations can usefully be grouped into three categories; attitudinal, union specific and structural. These categories are not mutually exclusive.

Attitudinal explanations focus on two inter-related issues: individualisation and instrumentality. The first concerns a perceived rise in individualism among young

workers, which is often coupled to a rejection of the collectivism inherent in trade unions. The roots of this argument lie in the new division of labour and in cultural modernisation. In particular, the arguments are advanced that individual responsibility is assuming priority over traditional solidarities, such as trade unions and social democratic parties (Valkenburg and Zoll 1995), and that new flexible production systems produce greater levels of individualisation (Hirsch and Roth 1986). Accentuating the impact of individualisation is the breakdown of many traditional points of common reference, which have been replaced by a multiplicity of different experiences (Giddens 1990). As trade unionism was embedded in many of these traditional points of reference, their dissipation leads to many young people not knowing what trade unions do. Taking this position to its end-point, some argue that individualisation is also associated with the adoption of unitary conceptions of society which will lead to the 'dissolution of labour movements' (Phelps-Brown 1990; Skidelsky 1995).

A second attitudinal argument advanced to explain the low rates of unionisation among young workers concerns their perceived instrumentality. Several features of this argument have been advanced. Some argue that young workers length of service with an employer tends to be shorter than for older workers as they move relatively rapidly from one job to another. Young workers thus have less attachment to their workplace and are less likely to unionise (Blinder 1972; Moore and Newman 1975). Others highlight the cost of union membership as a barrier to the unionisation of young workers, arguing that union contributions are a relatively larger proportion of the low pay received by many young workers. Associated with this argument is the view that trade union membership

offers insufficient benefits for the young worker, who thus declines to join (Allvin and Sverke 2000).

Union-specific explanations of decline focus attention on the attractiveness, or otherwise, of aspects of union organisation to young workers, rather than on the shifting attitudes of young workers. In particular, research suggests that the formal procedure of many unions 'puts-off' young workers, more used to the informal. Similarly, the structure of many union movements does not accommodate the frequent changes of employment experienced by young workers. The young worker may have to change trade union with each change of employment. In many cases this is simply impractical.

Throughout much of the period after 1945 until the late 1970s, trade unions improved the terms and conditions of employment and successfully lobbied for the expansion of welfare states. These successes reinforced the legitimacy of union movements, which, in turn, encouraged workers to join and members to participate in union activities. The hostile political and economic climate of the 1980s and 1990s has brought union legitimacy into question in several countries, as unions were portrayed as 'part of the problem' rather than as 'part of the solution'. Young workers are more likely to question the legitimacy of unions than their older counterparts. This is reflected in stronger beliefs among young workers that employers will look after them and a lack of trust in trade union officials. In Greece, for example, 70.1 per cent of young people expressed no trust in trade unions compared to only 22.9 per cent who did not trust the army and 40.6 per cent who did not trust the judiciary (ESYN 1999).

Structural explanations of the decline in union membership among young people emphasise the location of employment of young workers and the inadequacies of union

organisation at these locations. For example, the first section of this report showed that young workers are concentrated in the service sector and are more likely to work on some form of atypical contract. Furthermore, the unemployment rate among young people is higher than among the population as a whole. Throughout Europe, trade union organisation tends to be weaker in private sector services, among those on atypical contracts and, with the exception of the countries in which some variant of the Ghent system operates, among the unemployed (Ebbinghaus and Visser 2000; Waddington and Hoffmann 2000). Furthermore, workplaces in private sector services tend to be smaller than in other sectors of the labour market and unionisation rates tend to be lower at smaller workplaces. In other words, many young workers are found in areas of the labour market where trade unions are not. It is not surprising, therefore, that many young workers report that they are not union members because they have not been asked to join (MORI 1996).

Shifts in the occupational distribution of the employment of young workers are also associated with the structural explanation of declining unionisation. In particular, many young workers today tend to enter the labour market with higher levels of education qualification than their predecessors. These levels of education have enabled a relatively larger proportion of young workers to secure employment in white-collar occupations. Unionisation rates among white-collar workers have historically tended to be lower than among manual workers, although the difference in unionisation rates between the two occupational groups is now narrowing in most countries. A substantial number of white-collar workers with high level of education work in occupations with a significant 'professional' component, such as doctors, teachers or architects. Workers in these occupations expect a rather different range of support from trade unions than the

‘traditional’ trade union member, in the form of activities, communications, training and services that relate directly to their profession. An issue for trade unions is thus, to identify the particular forms of support required by young workers in these occupations.

2.3. Why Do Young Workers Join or Remain Apart from Trade Unions?

The reasons specified by new members for joining trade unions in Denmark and the UK are provided in Table 11. Both sets of data reflect different aspects of the three explanations of the decline in unionisation among young workers.

TABLE 11**WHY DO YOUNG WORKERS JOIN TRADE UNIONS?****A: Denmark¹**

Reason for joining	20 years of age or less	21-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51-60 years	61 years or older
You ought to be a member	2.0	2.2	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.2
To be solidaristic	2.9	3.0	2.4	2.1	1.7	1.5
To protect my interests	2.4	2.2	2.0	1.7	1.4	1.2
To belong to the unemployment fund	2.5	1.4	1.4	1.5	1.2	1.1
Because it is necessary ²	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.1	2.1

Source: Jorgensen *et al.* 1992.

Notes:

1. All scores are indexed on the basis that 'agree' = 1; 'partly agree' = 2; 'neither agree nor disagree' = 3; 'partly disagree' = 4; and 'disagree' = 5. A low index score thus indicates agreement with the statement.
2. 'Because it is necessary' may result from either employers' or trade union activity.

B: United Kingdom

Reason for joining ¹	Up to 20 years %	21 - 25 %	26 - 30 %	31 - 40 %	41 - 50 %	51 - 60 %	Over 60 %
Support if I have a problem at work	79.9	76.2	69.7	68.5	67.7	65.7	59.4
Improved pay and conditions	29.5	35.5	38.4	35.1	36.5	38.4	35.4
Because I believe in trade unions	7.2	12.8	16.1	18.6	17.9	18.7	22.9
Most people at work are members	16.8	15.0	12.9	12.6	12.5	13.1	18.8
Free legal advice	18.9	15.3	14.0	15.1	13.3	13.5	13.5
Industrial benefits	6.7	4.6	3.9	3.4	4.3	4.7	5.2
Training and education	5.3	7.1	4.8	4.7	4.1	3.0	1.0
Financial services	4.4	3.1	2.7	3.2	4.0	4.2	4.2
Professional services	6.4	7.6	6.2	6.1	5.6	3.4	1.0
Other reasons	4.6	5.3	6.9	7.0	8.4	6.8	10.4

Source: Waddington and Whitston 1997.

Note:

1. Each respondent was asked to specify the one or two main reasons for joining a union, hence the percentage data add up to more than 100 per cent.

There are clear attitudinal differences among Danish workers from the various age groups. Older workers tend to agree with each of the different reasons for joining more than younger workers. For example, 'to be solidaristic' and 'you ought to be a member' are inversely related to age, with younger workers being less solidaristic and less inclined to think that people ought to be union members. While this result does not indicate greater individualism among young workers, it certainly suggests a less pronounced sense of collectivism among young workers.⁴ Older workers, however, are more instrumental insofar as they tend to emphasise the importance of belonging to an unemployment fund more than younger workers. For older workers, belonging to an unemployment fund was the single most important reason for being a union member.

For young Danish workers 'to protect my interests' was the second most important priority. This result is open to interpretation. Those that suggest that young workers are more instrumental might claim support for their position from this result, as it shows that young workers join unions to look after themselves. Those advocating other reasons for the decline in membership among young people might claim that unions have traditionally protected members at their workplaces and that this result shows young workers think that this should continue. Additional weight is lent to this latter argument by young workers' preferences for 'you ought to be a member' as their most important reason for joining in Denmark.

The data from the UK reveal a similar pattern of reasons for joining. As in the UK trade unions have no role in the administration of unemployment funds, this reason is not relevant. 'Support if I have a problem at work' is the prime reason people join trade unions in the UK, irrespective of their age, although younger workers tend to emphasise

this issue more than older workers. This may reflect greater insecurity among younger workers or a more pronounced sense of instrumentality. It certainly indicates that for trade unions a priority is to ensure that adequate support is provided to members at their workplaces. The evidence on collectivism among young workers is contradictory in the UK. Young trade unionists are less likely to believe in trade unions than older trade union members, but are also more likely to join a union if their colleagues at work are members. Similarly, the argument about the instrumental attitudes of young workers is not proven from the UK data. To the contrary, young trade union members are less likely than older trade unionists to join a trade union in order to ‘improve pay and conditions’.

Reasons provided by young workers for not joining a union are wide-ranging, are often country or labour market sector specific, and are not consistent across countries. It should be noted from the outset that there is very little consistent evidence suggesting any widespread opposition in principle to trade unions among young people. The primary reasons for non-membership are reviewed below.

- *Lack of knowledge/contact.* Evidence from most countries suggests that large numbers of young workers are unaware of what unions do and how they function. This is particularly the case in private sector service industries where union traditions are not embedded, and there are fewer opportunities to come into contact with trade unionists. Allied with this is a shortage of information about how to change working conditions and, in particular, how trade unions might change inadequate workplace conditions (Biddle et al. 2000). The ‘rationale’ of trade unionism is thus lost on many young workers.

- *Small workplaces.* Young workers at small workplaces emphasise the difficulties with their employer or manager that would result if they became union members. Two aspects of this position are often cited. Firstly, the threat of the sack or redundancy is mentioned, particularly if the young worker is employed on some form of insecure contract. Secondly, young workers mention that it is easier to resolve their problems by addressing their manager directly, rather than through a trade union.
- *The image of trade unions.* Many young workers associate trade unions with manufacturing industry, workplaces with a perceived risk of injury or poor health and safety practices, and with strikes. Young women workers are also more likely to view unions as being dominated by middle-aged white men who have little understanding of their interests. For many young workers the image of trade unions is thus inappropriate for their own workplace.
- *Job insecurity and turnover.* Young workers in precarious employment with high rates of labour turnover do not join trade unions because they do not think that trade unions can make a difference at their workplace. If they have a problem at work they are more likely to approach their manager or to leave work to find another position of precarious employment. That there are problems at work for many of these young workers is also beyond doubt. Low pay, ‘bad’ treatment from the manager and intense workloads are regularly cited by young workers as dominating their working lives. The opportunity is thus present for unions to exploit, but unions must be available at the workplace if they are to take advantage of these opportunities.

To summarise, in Denmark and the UK there are differences in emphasis between young and older workers in the reasons that underpin their trade unionism, rather than

differences in principle. Furthermore, it is the protection of interests or the provision of support at the workplace that is central to the trade unionism of workers of all ages. This suggests that trade unions do not necessarily require an entirely new agenda in order to attract young workers, but that they need to establish a presence at more workplaces where young people are employed. Reasons for non-membership tend to support this view in that the absence of contact with, or knowledge of, unions inhibits young people from joining.

2.4. How are Trade Unions Encouraging Young Workers to Join and Participate?

Key to encouraging young workers to join trade unions is ensuring that trade unions are available in the workplaces where young workers are employed. In order to reverse the aggregate membership decline sustained since the mid-1970s, many trade union movements have embarked on a vast range of recruitment and organising campaigns. Many of these campaigns are directed to ensuring that a trade union representative is present at every workplace. The impact of these general recruitment initiatives is not assessed here, although they are fundamental to the recruitment of more young workers, because it is at the workplace that most young workers experience inequality and insecurity. Instead, our emphasis is on the measures that have been specifically introduced as a means to attract and engage with young people. In broad terms, activities are concentrated in three areas;

- changing the image of trade unions,
- highlighting an agenda appropriate for young people,
- reforming union organisation to encourage membership and participation.

Changing the image of trade unions. The view of trade unions held by many young people is heavily influenced by the portrayal of trade unions on the television. While newspapers, family members and work colleagues also influence the perception of young workers, they have a minor effect compared with television. Schools, colleges and universities are marginal to the perceptions of young people towards trade unions. Furthermore, many young workers see trade unions as implicated in their poor situation at work. A central issue is thus the production of education and information materials appropriate for distribution at schools, colleges and workplaces, which inform young people of the purpose and functioning of trade unions.

A range of measures is also in place to ‘bring the perception of trade unions closer to young people’. Trade unions now have a presence on many university campuses, particularly where large numbers of students engage in part-time work. Some trade unions also participate in professional training programmes. Unions that represent nurses, for example, often have access to training programmes. This access is used to explain the professional advantages accruing from union membership and serve as a recruitment platform. Efforts to alter the image of trade unions among young people encompass a union presence at music festivals and concerts. Union stalls at such events are intended to increase awareness. Union sponsorship is also becoming more popular. The *GMB* union in the UK sponsors Brentford and Scunthorpe football clubs, thereby ensuring that union logos appear on the players’ shirts. *Metal* in Denmark used to sponsor the national womens’ handball team, but no longer does so because of financial cuts. The selected use of television by unions is also becoming more frequent. Advertisements intended to highlight the benefits of membership are being used, as well as the more traditional

participation of union representatives on news programmes. Furthermore, many unions have employed young people in high-profile positions in order to encourage more wide-ranging engagement with young workers.

Highlighting an agenda appropriate for young people. An agenda appropriate for young people must address their situation within the labour market and any shift in attitudes. Throughout the 1980s many unions started to offer packages of financial services as a means to attract potential members who were perceived to be more ‘individualised’ and more likely to respond to a consumer-based appeal. Among the groups targeted by these measures were young workers. Financial services included discounted insurance for holidays, homes and belongings; credit cards; discounted mortgage schemes; and access to cheaper motoring. Although many of these packages of financial services remain on offer, there is little evidence to suggest that they are attractive to young potential members (see Table 11 for the data on the UK). The provision of legal aid and advice, however, has proved successful as a recruitment tool in several countries.

More recently union movements have invested more in ‘back to basics’ campaigns, which focus directly on the labour market issues of concern to young people. Much of the union literature prepared for young potential members highlights job insecurity, the need to protect young workers, measures to alleviate stress, anti-bullying and victimisation, and the issues associated with low pay. In countries with long traditions of workplace vocational training, the role of unions in securing this training for young workers has been highlighted and measures introduced to ensure that such training is made available to a larger proportion of young workers. In addition, and associated with image building, unions have laid emphasis on their concern with, and policies to

alleviate, high youth unemployment. Local trade union centres for the unemployed and joint initiatives between trade unions and unemployment action groups have become commonplace in many countries (Fonteneau and Meunier n.d.). The *Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging* (FNV), for example, developed special training facilities for unemployed youth who have low levels of formal education and left school at an early age (Olney 1996). Similarly, at the insistence of the three union confederations, the social pact in Italy makes specific reference to measures to address youth unemployment (Negrelli 1997).

Reforming union organisation to encourage membership and participation. Wide-ranging measures have also been implemented by trade unions to reform their structures and practices to encourage higher levels of membership among young workers and participation in union affairs among young members. Many unions, for example, offer reduced subscription rates for young members, that may also be linked to lower subscription rates for part-time and student members. Few young members are aware that their union subscription may be tax deductible. This is not surprising in many cases because the young worker may not earn enough to pay tax. Similarly, the establishment of youth sections, youth forums or youth committees, convened by officers specifically appointed to pursue interests of concern to young members are widespread. Many of these committee structures have jettisoned the formal procedure that characterises trade union engagement in favour of more informal styles of operation. It remains to be seen, however, whether the agenda items arising from these structures come to occupy central positions in the trade union agenda or are merely peripheral to the agenda formulated by the traditional membership.

Several union movements have also experimented with union cards for young workers which provide the holder with access to union benefits and protections, irrespective of their place of employment. This card accompanies the young worker through any changes in employment and, thus, obviating the need for the young worker to join a new union at every change of employment. Such an approach is relatively easy to implement where major confederations occupy significant positions in bargaining and representation as in France and Spain. Where different unions compete for members on industrial or occupational lines, the provision of a single union card is more difficult to administer and support. In order to address this issue the *Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond* (CNV) in the Netherlands established a separate union for young workers, which all members of CNV affiliated unions aged 27 or less belong.

Recruitment campaigns dedicated to young workers are also becoming more widespread. Central to these campaigns is the recognition that young workers must be targeted with an agenda that is appropriate to them. The issue is to persuade young workers that unions are pertinent to their workplaces rather than those of other people and to go out and find the young workers rather than assume that they will find the union. Furthermore, these campaigns acknowledge that there are significant divisions within the category young worker, which necessitate different recruitment approaches. The requirements of students working to fund their education, for example, differ from those of unskilled, low paid workers in catering or distribution, who are often employed on atypical contracts. A third group among the young workforce is the relatively highly paid technicians, specialists and professionals employed in computing, banking or research and development, who may be relatively well paid. The Organising Academy of the

Trades Union Congress (TUC) is specifically directed to the recruitment of young workers. At the Organising Academy young people are trained in recruitment, representation and organising skills, before taking up recruitment positions in unions affiliated to the TUC. The assumption underpinning the Organising Academy is that 'like best recruits like'; that is, young workers are most likely to be recruited by young organisers.

CONCLUSIONS

Recent developments within the EU labour market have resulted in significant changes for young people. Rising participation rates in education have been accompanied by higher rates of unemployment among young workers compared to the labour force as a whole and an increased likelihood of employment on some form of atypical contract. Furthermore, shifts in employment towards services among the entire labour force were matched by similar trends among young workers.

The recruitment, organisation and representation of young workers by trade unions have been adversely affected by these labour market developments. The number of young people in trade unions has tended to decline over recent years. While shifts in the composition of the labour force have promoted this decline, they are not the sole reason. In addition, there is evidence of some change in attitudes among young people, which involve a move away from the collectivism that underpins trade unionism. Trade unions were slow to respond to the changes experienced by young people and failed to formulate an agenda that attracted young people in sufficient numbers to replace the traditional membership lost from the manufacturing heart lands of trade unionism.

REFERENCES

- Ahlèn, K. 1994. *Unfulfilled Ambitions: Democratic Legitimacy in Swedish Labor Unions*. Stockholm: Arbetslivscentrum.
- Allvin, M. and Sverke, M. 2000. 'Do New Generations Imply the End of Solidarity? Swedish Unionism in the Era of Individualization', *Economic and Industrial Democracy*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 71-95.
- Biddle, D., Croce, N., Lequeux, S., Rowe, D. and Stevenson, D. 2000. *Young People's Attitudes to Trade Unions* A study prepared for the Newcastle Trades Hall Council. University of Newcastle.
- Blinder, A. 1972. 'Who Joins Unions?'. Working Paper, No. 36. Princeton: Princeton University, Department of Economics, Industrial Relations Section.
- Crespo, E., Moreno, F., Serrano, A., Fernández, P and Sánchez, C. 1998. *El significado del trabajo y la ciudadanía social en los estudiantes de la Enseñanza secundaria* Report prepared for the Ministry of Science and Education.
- Demazière, D and Pignoni, M. 1998. *Chômeurs: du silence à la révolte*. Paris: Hachette Littératures.
- Ebbinghaus, B. and Visser, J. 2000. *Trade Unions in Western Europe since 1945*. London: MacMillan.
- ESYN. 1999. *The Values, Attitudes and Opinions of Greek Youth*. Athens: General Secretariat of Youth of Greece.
- Eurostat. 1998. *Employment in Europe*. Brussels: European Commission.
- Eurostat. 1999. *Labour Force Survey: Principal Results 1998, Statistics in Focus*. Theme 3- 11. Brussels: European Commission.
- Fina Sanglas, L. 1999 'Planes de acción para el empleo: España, Bélgica y Holanda', *Políticas de empleo en la Unión Europea: Presente y Futuro* Vitoria: Federación de Cajas de Ahorros Vasco-Navarras
- Fonteneau, G. Meunier, A. n.d. *Trade Unions, Social Exclusion and Insecurity*. Brussels: European Trade Union Confederation.
- Giddens, A. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Hartog, J. 1999. 'Country Employment. Policy Reviews: The Netherlands', *Social Dialogue and Employment Success*, ILO Symposium, Geneva, 23 March.

- Hirsch, J. and Roth, R. 1986. *Das neue Gesicht des Kapitalismus. Vom Fordismus zum Post-Fordismus*. Hamburg: VSA-Verlag.
- Jørgensen, H., Lassen, M., Lind, J. and Madsen, M. 1992. *Medlemmer og Meninger*. København: LO.
- Kelly, J. and Waddington, J. 1995. 'New Prospects for British Labour', *Organization*, Vol. 2, No. 3/4 pp. 415-426.
- Madsen, M. 1997. 'The Relationship between Working Life and Individualisation: A Study of Danish Trade Union Members', *Work, Employment and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 197-212.
- Moore, W. and Newman, R. 1975. 'On the Prospects for American Trade Union Growth: A Cross-Section Analysis', *Review of Economics and Statistics*. Vol. 57, pp. 435-445.
- MORI. 1996. *Young People and Employment: Computer Tables*. Research Study conducted for the Trades Union Congress. May. London: Market and Opinion Research International.
- Negrelli, S. 1997. 'Social Pacts and Flexibility: Towards a New Balance between Macro and Micro Industrial Relations: The Italian Experience' in Fajertag, G. and Pochet, P. (eds.). *Social Pacts in Europe*. Brussels: ETUI.
- Olney, S. 1996. *Unions in a Changing World*. Geneva: International Labour Office.
- Phelps-Brown, H. 1990. 'The Counter-revolution of our Time', *Industrial Relations*, Vol. 29, No. 1, pp. 1-14.
- Serrano Pascual, A. 1999 *The integration of young people into the labour market: A new Trade Unions Focus*. Report prepared in the framework of the Staedelin Ecosoc program.
- Serrano Pascual, A. 2000. 'The concept of employability: a critical assessment to fight against youth unemployment' in Gabaglio, E. and Hoffmann, R. (eds.). *European Trade Union Yearbook*. Brussels: ETUI.
- Skidelsky, R. 1995. *The World after Communism*. London: MacMillan.
- Valkenburg, B. and Zoll, R. 1995. 'Modernization, Individualization and Solidarity', *European Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 119-144.
- Waddington, J. and Whitston, C. 1997. 'Why Do People Join Trade Unions in a Period of Membership Decline?', *British Journal of Industrial Relations*, Vol. 35, No. 4, pp. 515-546.

Waddington, J. and Hoffmann, R. 2000. (eds.). *Trade Unions in Europe: Facing Challenges and Searching for Solutions*. Brussels: ETUI.

FOOTNOTES

¹. In 1996 only 8 per cent of the Dutch population had only a basic secondary education qualification, whereas 25 per cent had a higher education qualification (Hartog 1999).

² Spending longer in the education system does not necessarily imply a better educational level. For example, university courses in Ireland typically last for 4 years, whereas a similar course in other countries may take 5 years to complete. In such a situation, the reduced length of the course has not been an obstacle for the young Irish person to attain a level of education comparable to their European colleagues.

³. Variants of the Ghent system operate in Belgium and Finland where high rates of unionisation are also recorded.

⁴. The relationship between individualism and collectivism is not clear-cut. Following Kelly and Waddington (1995) it is assumed here that the relationship between individualism and collectivism is not zero-sum. In other words, a person may assume more characteristics of an individualist nature, but retain much of his/her collectivism.