

MYTHBUSTER “YOUNG PEOPLE JUST DON’T LIKE HARD WORK”

Since the crisis, there have been big changes to employment law across Europe making it easier to hire and fire workers. Governments have often claimed that this ‘flexibility’ will mean more job opportunities for young people. However, this has left many young workers in a cycle of insecure work and low pay, where the only employment opportunities open to them are temporary contracts. When the contract comes to an end, they have to look for another job meaning there is little chance to build a stable life, let alone advance professionally and get a pay rise.

Sound familiar? Young people are often told that they are paid less and receive irregular contracts because they are lazy or don’t know how to work hard. The reality is that young people face a level of insecurity that their parents’ generation did not—and the numbers back this up.

MYTH:

 Temporary work has affected all workers equally.

FACT:

 The proportion of workers with temporary contracts is massively skewed towards young people. While **only 14 percent of employees in the EU have a temporary contract, this number climbs to 44 percent among young people**. They often lack essential social security as well as opportunities for training or career progression. It means young workers often don’t know if they will have a paycheck next month or how much it will be.¹

 Young workers choose to work part-time.

 Those on temporary contracts and working part time are disproportionately young people. Across the EU, about one in four part-time workers and every second employee with a temporary contract stated in 2017 that they would prefer – but could not find – a standard job.² Young people often want fulltime employment but simply can’t find it. **Over a quarter of young people working part time in Europe say they want a fulltime job but cannot find one.**³

 Young people want to be self-employed because they like the flexibility.

 Over one in five self-employed people are either in vulnerable or hidden self-employment. This means that they have low earnings and don’t benefit from the autonomy usually associated with being your own boss. Often, employers make workers register as self-employed to reduce their costs in taxes and social security. Only half of self-employed people without employees say they chose to work for themselves, and 24 percent say they had no alternative.⁴

 Young people have more money than previous generations and they waste it all on avocados and coffee.

 Over a quarter of young people in Europe are at risk of poverty. The figures are shocking not just in Southern European countries, like Greece (40%) or Spain (34%), but also in countries thought of as wealthier. Denmark, for example, measures 37%, with an increasing trend over the last decade.⁵

 Getting a job is the way to get out of poverty.

 In-work poverty has skyrocketed, particularly for young people. 10% of young people that have a job are at risk of poverty around Europe. The numbers are highest in Spain and Romania at above 16%, but are also worrying in some Nordic countries, like Denmark and Norway, with 14.5% and 16%, respectively.⁶

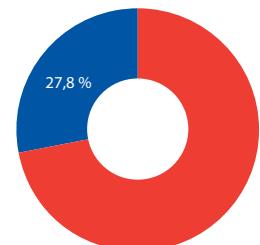
What are trade unions doing about it?

All over Europe, young people are joining unions and winning agreements with better conditions for trainees, apprentices and young workers. Here are just a few examples, find out more at togetheratwork.eu

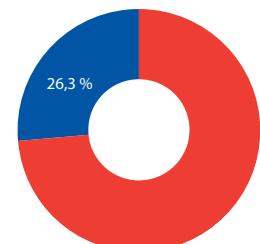


Belgium

The Belgian trade union, FGTB, has won an agreement with employers which ensures that an amount equal to at least 0.05% of all salary costs are set aside for training. Initiatives covered are aimed at people under 26 and those in at-risk groups.



Young people working part-time who would like a fulltime job but cannot find one



Young people in the EU at risk of poverty

Germany

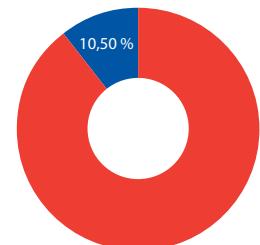
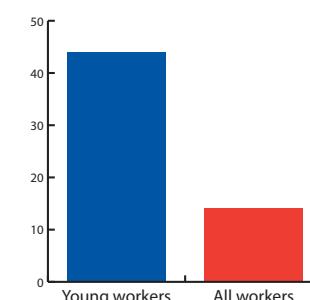
Chemical trade union IGBCE has negotiated a number of measures to give young workers the time and support they need to train. These include a guaranteed number of trainee positions, training before a job is taken up and more places for trainees to be taken on as permanent employees.

The union’s collective agreements with employers also provide for a day off before exams, a €700 holiday allowance per year and an annual training allowance of between €1000 and €1200 to supplement apprentices’ on-the-job learning.

Netherlands

The FNV trade union has negotiated higher pay rises for young workers in their collective agreement for the metal sector. To take account of the fact that young people tend to be underpaid, these workers will get a rise of 5.49% over the two-deal deal, compared to 3.72% for others.

Workers in the EU with temporary contracts %



Young people who work but are still at risk of poverty in the EU

¹ Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019, How are you doing, Europe? Mapping social imbalances in the EU. ² Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2019, How are you doing, Europe? Mapping social imbalances in the EU. ³ Eurostat, 2018, Main reasons for part-time employment of young people by sex and age. ⁴ European Working Conditions Survey, 2015. ⁵ Eurostat, 2018, People at risk of poverty or social exclusion by age and sex. ⁶ Eurostat, 2018, In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate by age and sex - EU-SILC survey