

Vulnerable Workers in Times of Social Transformations

Discrimination and Participation of Young and Older Workers,
and Social Dialogue Stances

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Innovative Approaches to Age Diversity Management through Social Dialogue An Immersion through Case Studies

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Abstract This chapter aims at presenting the analysis of programs and innovative practices in the six national contexts examined, focusing on support to younger and older workers at risk of labour market exclusion. Along these lines, the chapter highlights some innovative practices implemented through social dialogue in the six national contexts, addressed to young people, older workers and both target groups.

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1 Social Dialogue and Age Diversity Management

Social dialogue is the main tool by which trade union and employers' representatives contribute to the definition of most European social regulations: working conditions, setting wage standards, continuous training, new technologies, work organization and working hours are some examples of specific issues to which European social partners are committed.

The latest report on Industrial Relations in Europe (European Commission 2013) shows how the current economic crisis is seriously affecting social dialogue (at European and national level) between trade unions, employers' representatives and governments.

The Commission's report does not hide the most critical aspects of austerity policies introduced after the economic recession. The report, in fact, shows how reforms adopted in recent years by governments have not always been accompanied by open and effective social dialogue, with the

result that industrial relations have become weaker and more conflictual.

In many countries, during the crisis, there have been fundamental changes through reforms which have affected labour law. According to the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI), looking at developments in the various countries, four main areas of labour law changes or reforms can be identified. Fundamental changes are being made to working time (1) and atypical employment (2), mainly in response to the economic and financial crisis, although such reforms tend to be temporary. There are also reforms of and changes to rules on redundancy (for business reasons) (3) and industrial relations structures and processes (4), which affects social dialogue and collective bargaining. These reforms tend to be (more) permanent. But whether such changes consist of the overhaul of whole labour codes or piecemeal changes to specific aspects and rules, they undermine the protective role of both individual and collective labour law, thus putting workers (young and old) in a more precarious and unprotected situation both in general and in the workplace. In several countries reforms were introduced without employing democratic and participatory (legislative) procedures, but rather using emergency procedures, bypassing parliaments or the social partners (Clauwaert, Schömann 2012).

The LinkAge research has focused, among other things, on the measures and strategies undertaken by trade unions and employer's representatives to strengthen the integration of vulnerable age groups and their families into the labour market. Social dialogue is, in fact, defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as all forms of negotiation, consultation and exchange of information between representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest.

The analysis contained in the previous chapters provides a complex and diverse framework of age diversity management in the six national contexts studied. In this chapter, we shall try to gain a better understanding of the characteristics and the roles played held by different social dialogue actors – especially trade unions, employers and non-governmental organizations – to support the inclusion of vulnerable age groups into labour market.

For this purpose, through the analysis of programs and innovative practices in the six national contexts studied, the LinkAge project has deepened knowledge of actions, tools and strategies fielded by stakeholders to address the interests and needs of younger and older workers, trying to change the dynamics in the labour market.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first analyses some practices implemented at European level by stakeholders who are involved in different ways in the issue of age diversity management. Information on good practices has been collected mainly in structured seminars, 'Information Exchanges', aimed at sharing information and best practices across the range of identified trade unions, experts and policy makers within the

established partnership/member states and networks.¹ In this way, the project promoted the exchange of knowledge between those actively involved in working with vulnerable age groups and trade unions from different fields and perspectives, reconciling an in-depth conceptual debate with a pragmatic evaluative framework. The main objective of these exchanges were the sharing of information, findings, best practices and the collection of reviews and comments from experts identified within the networks of the partnership. The second paragraph is dedicated to an analysis of innovative practices implemented through social dialogue in the six national contexts addressing young people, older workers and both target groups.

The LinkAge investigation has collected actions and measures addressing the needs and demands of young and older workers in relation to their active inclusion in the labour market. Interviews with workers' representatives and experts have highlighted a heterogeneous but exhaustive framework on several best practices in the countries analysed. Those practices have been classified on the basis of the three different levels of design and implementation: national (macro); regional (meso); factory-level/town (micro) both for younger and older workers.

As a matter of fact, the issues of integration, protection and promotion of older and younger workers, at national and European level, concerns the need to tackle both increasing youth unemployment and the structure of the pension system. On the one hand, the lack of jobs, and often low job demand quality, have hugely increased youth unemployment in all European countries, with many differences among countries, due to existing and deep-rooted structural and cultural reasons. On the other hand, the restructuring processes associated with the destandardization of employment relationships and the permanent reshaping of the pension systems have made the position of older workers very vulnerable.

Along these lines, the governments of the six countries analysed have to address these two issues at the same time with different resources (especially in terms of financing) and different social dialogue traditions.

Finally, the third section contains some suggestions from the main research findings addressed to social dialogue actors, in particular policy makers, trade unions, employers and employers' associations to enhance Labour Market Integration of Vulnerable Age Groups.

¹ The European stakeholders who attended the information exchange were policymakers, policy advisors, trade unions, representatives of NGOs as well as employers', workers and academics. At the European level, as regards trade unions, the experts involved are representatives of: ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation - Yough Committee), EESC (European Economic and Social Committee), ETUI (European Trade Union Institute). As regards the associations and non-governmental organizations, representatives from AGE Platform Europe, of EQUINET (European Network of Equal Bodies) and EWL (European Women's Lobby) participated in the project.

2 Social Dialogue and Good Practices at European Level

The economic and financial crisis has weakened the system of protection and social security for workers (young and old), and this has had a negative impact on social dialogue. In particular, in Europe and elsewhere, the power of trade unions has weakened. This is due to several factors such as: 1) employment grew particularly in the services sector (characterized by low union presence) at the expense of industry or manufacturing, where unions have historically been the most active; 2) the emergence and proliferation of different types of contract: the rise in part-time employment, diversification of employment contracts, the growth of job insecurity and expansion of hidden economy, especially in some countries of the Mediterranean; 3) changes in the labour market in recent decades have led to a decline in the importance of collective bargaining, and the continued loss of union strength.

In more recent years, after several European initiatives such as European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012), there have been some steps forward that have contributed to a revival of social dialogue, which is one of the pillars of the European social model. In particular, among the issues analysed by LinkAge research we highlight the central role of negotiation and bargaining and the need to focus the attention of policy on dialogue between generations and on overcoming age discrimination in and out of the labour market .

The role of negotiation and collective bargaining, involving front-line unions and employers both at European and national level. Bargaining should ensure an adequate level of social security for all workers and should ensure the quality of work. Austerity policies, implemented by many European countries to tackle the economic crisis, hit the vulnerable groups in the labour market: women, youth, immigrants and the elderly. Among these, young people seem to be those who do not feel represented by the unions. The difficulties young people feel towards trade union are mainly due to the fact that young people are often employed in precarious jobs and it's hard to get in touch with a union. On these issues, an innovative instrument was the *Framework of actions on youth employment*.² This document is the first priority of the Work Programme on Social Dialogue for 2012-2014. The European social partners undertake to combat youth unemployment and invite the national social partners, public authorities and other stakeholders to work together and achieve concrete results through policies targeted at specific areas of policy such as: learning, transition

2 The document was elaborated by ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation), BUSINESSEUROPE (represents all-size enterprises at european level), EEAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-size Enterprises) and CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public services).

into and within the labour market with efficient unemployment insurance and social safety nets which are financially sustainable in the longer term, employment, entrepreneurship.

The improvement in working conditions through collective bargaining should take into account an approach based not on differences between young workers (precarious conditions but educationally advantaged) and older workers (more stable but more fragile in cases of restructuring due to deskilling) but on the entire life cycle. Some studies conducted in Europe³ have shown that there is not a young-elderly trade-off in the labour market and in the workplace there is lack of attention to age: these main factors lead to tension and or solidarity across and within generations. One of the challenges for the future of these issues concerns industrial relations systems.

Collective bargaining should pay attention to age management in the workplace. This also requires a cultural change in the trade unions, which should reinforce their commitment to the implementation of strategic actions aimed not only at the defence of passive labour policies but also active labour policies, such lifelong learning, reconciliation of life and work. Even the commitment and effort of employers should focus on proactively managing age diversity.

The other issue analysed as an example of European innovative practices was on intergenerational dynamics and the role of social dialogue. According to European institutions, political attention to ‘intergenerational solidarity’ should be focused to ensure access to the labour market and equal opportunities for workers of all ages during the entire life cycle and to develop measures to prevent early exit of older workers together with measures to facilitate the entry of young people into the labour market. It is necessary to promote and strengthen dialogue between generations through the exchange of practices and experiences in and out of the labour market between younger and older workers. An example in this area is the strategy promoted by AGE Platform Europe Age friendly in Europe within the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity (2012). AGE platform analysed, in collaboration with the European Union, the impact of legislation against discrimination in the labour market for older workers, this analysis focused in particular on the transposition of EU directives implemented at national level by Member States. A positive element to note is that employers seem more ‘aware’ of discrimination in employment based on age and in many cases eliminated age limits have been from the process of worker recruitment. It becomes necessary to tackle age discrimination and enhance the experience and the diversity of people

3 This studies was conducted by ETUI (European Trade Union Institute); for more details see <http://www.etui.org>

(both young and old) in and out of the labour market. The prohibition of any kind of discrimination is stated in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union under Article 21: «Any discrimination based on any grounds such as sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited». In this sector, strategic information and awareness action was implemented by EQUINET, the European network of equality bodies, which conducted a survey at the European level, the results being published in *Tackling Ageism and Discrimination*.⁴ It is important to plan and implement policy actions to remove barriers and to promote active aging: an important role can be played by European Institutions, Member States and Equality Bodies.

3 Innovative Practices from the Ground and Proposals for the Future

3.1 The Issue of Young People

In Austria there are some innovative practices for young people, such the projects: coordination units (Tyrol, Vienna, Salzburg, Vorarlberg and Styria) aimed at implementing different initiatives at the intersection between school and the labour market; production schools (Styria, Vorarlberg, Tyrol) aimed at giving youth at risk of exclusion (young migrants are a special target group) the opportunity to gain work experience in different sectors; BFB Migration (Styria region) aimed at supporting young migrants (1st and 2nd generation) in the transition from school to work through counselling services and school workshops.

At local level, some of the best practices in Vienna include: C'mon 14, a project focused on young people aged between 14 and 17 at risk of marginalization and school drop-outs in order to (re)integrate them into the labour market; JAWANext - labour market integration for young asylum seekers; JE_TZT, coaching and apprenticeship positions for young people (who received social benefits) then supported in job placement; job-TransFair aimed at integrating young people receiving social benefits into the labour market by combining activation, qualification and on the job trainings/internships; space!lab - I pimp my future, focused on offering qualification and training services to young people at risk of marginalization. In Bregenz: the project Integra focused on NEETs and young people who drop out of school, who are offered paid work on an hourly basis combined with counselling and coaching.

⁴ For more details please visit <http://www.equineteurope.org>.

In Belgium, the promotion of youth employment has focused on support given by senior consultants to young people on the development of business projects and skills required for entrepreneurship, such as the Partnership between Belgian Senior Consultants and Le mouvement des jeunes entreprises. Then the Belgian federal Government has also promoted programmes targeted at the inclusion of young workers such as the First Job Programme for workers under 25 excluded from compulsory education. This program aims at including them into the labour market through a quota system to encourage employers to hire young people through financial incentives for hiring young workers. Then mention should be made of the project of the Belgian organization 'Duo for a job', carrying out intergenerational mentoring by matching young people residing in Brussels who are experiencing difficulties entering the labour market because of their ethnicity and/or geographical origins, with experienced senior professionals who can support and assist them in their professional projects (education, training, employment). This initiative aims to reduce inequities faced by young immigrants in accessing the labour market by highlighting the value of seniors, eradicating age segregation, reinforcing ethnic diversity, encouraging intergenerational actions and combating stereotypes and xenophobia by recreating social bonds.

In Italy, the main best practices are at the regional level. In this regard, mention should be made of the following examples: Tuscany region has financed the project *Giovani Si* with the aim of ensuring incentives, grants and financial support to young people wishing to carry out training courses, buy a house or start a business activity. Lombardy region has financed *Dote formazione e lavoro* for young people aged between 18 and 29 years. In 2012, Veneto Region conceived specific financing for young people aged between 15 and 35 years called *Crea Lavoro*. The call has a budget of 50,000 euros, which will be assigned to the best business ideas. Then at local level, some provinces, such as Cremona, Lecco and Milan, have financed several fellowships to support young people wanting to start a traineeship in local firms. In terms of involving workers, a further enriching experience, in this case addressed to young people, is to be found in Italy. This relates to the opening of specific social spaces to promote participation of young people, promoted by the CGIL, located in Bergamo as Toolbox; in Padua, Reset; in Lecce, Spazio Sociale del lavoro and in Florence, Plas. These local spaces are devoted to the encouragement of young people to get involved in social bargaining, as a means to claim their rights and needs, providing guidance to access training and paid work and awareness about social security and other rights.

In Poland, for the promotion of youth employment in 2012, the National Committee of the NSZZ Solidarność, in cooperation with the CSRInfo, has launched the programme Generations within the Workplace. Good Practices in the of Use and Expansion of the Potential Offered by Young and

Mature Employees aimed at: increasing youth employment; professional development of young people; shaping solutions allowing employees to combine work and family obligations; skill-development programmes.

In Spain, measures to tackle youth unemployment have been implemented addressing the issue of NEET youngsters. In this regard, the Initial Vocational Qualification Programme (PQPI) is aimed at young unemployed workers under 25 years who have not obtained the graduation certificate from compulsory secondary education, in order to provide them with vocational training adapted to the qualifications requirements of the local labour market. Basic Vocational Training (included in the compulsory secondary education curricula and in the 'Bachilleratos') has two primary aims: to familiarize young people with the importance of technological issues and to ensure that they are fully aware about occupations, professions and the labour market. Then the Specific Vocational Training aims at providing on-the-job training through: middle-level vocational schooling, for which a certificate of compulsory education is required or approval in an admission test; Higher-level Specific Vocational Schooling - the successful completion of the 'Bachillerato' and, in some cases, the study of certain subjects is required for admission.

In United Kingdom, youth unemployment has only recently been recognized by unions as a main political concern, which has pushed them to implement campaigns against public spending cuts and 'zero-hour contracts'. Job search is managed mainly through the services available at the Jobcentre Plus offices spread all over the country, which provide a wide range of information and services, like benefits, loans and grants and help with finding a job, applying for an apprenticeship and improving career skills and training.

3.2 The Issue of Older Workers

In Austria, especially at regional and local level, there are several projects set up and supported by regional governments and local public employment services (AMS, Arbeitsmarktservice) using special financial programs to cope with the issue of older workers. Among them, the most innovative are: at national level, the project Fit für die Zukunft: Arbeitsfähigkeit erhalten, Personal-förderprogramm in Zeiten des demografischen Wandels, an individual programme ensuring healthy working conditions for construction workers and employees in 20 Austrian organizations (representing 13,000 employees), promoting and maintaining work ability in the company and the project TEP EQUAL Elderly which provides 'elderly plans' to facilitate and enhance the required changes, based on the needs of individuals, enterprises and different actors in labour market policy; identification of adequate instruments and methods for older workers; in

Carinthia, the project Cont@ct.top – Förderprogramm für Arbeitssuchende Aktivierung zukünftiger Arbeitgeber, a tailor-made project providing qualification and training, including health supporting activities, for workers over 45, in order to be re-integrated in the labour market; the project Impulse – Zweirad, dealing with the transition from long-term unemployment to employment in bicycle repair, maintenance and bicycle renting; graduated pathways to integration; personal support in finding jobs and the project Learn Forever, ensuring equal access to lifelong learning for underprivileged women (poorly skilled and older women); know-how development of actors in adult education in the form of in-house seminars; workshops; transfer of learning from other educational institutions to learn forever; in Upper Austria, the programme Winning Age. Getting Future!, providing expertise in generation management, a platform for information and knowledge transfer in order to contribute to the better handling of demographic changes in the business world.

In Belgium, an innovative instrument was also recently adopted with the aim of keeping older workers in their jobs. To this end, the National Labour Council agreement implemented a plan for the employment of older workers in companies, which requires private companies with more than 20 employees to have an annual or perennial plan with at least one employment measure regarding skills development through access to training, career opportunities, flexibility of working hours and conditions, recognition of acquired skills.

In Italy, the government provided financial incentives aimed at the re-entry of older workers into the labour market. To this end, the Italian Ministry of Labour and Social Policy recently financed a project focused on the outplacement of unemployed executives over 50 years of age, with the goal of promoting the implementation of actions for re-employment through the activation of specific financing for companies. Then the Confindustria employers' association of Veneto Region implemented the project Sam (Senior Age Management) and the Ifoa institution in the Emilia-Romagna Region launched the project Active ageing, competencies and training, both aimed at supporting enterprises in the implementation of new patterns of work organization in order to prevent the early exit of the over 50s.

In Poland a positive example of best practice was the training offered by the management of a hospital to the employees of a laundry which was about to be shut down. The employees underwent a training course which allowed them to gain new skills. Subsequently, as the laundry was closed, the employees were transferred to the Hygiene Department and re-employed there.

In Spain, recent measures at national level have addressed the issue of age discrimination by increasing the costs for companies for lay-offs, where older workers might be disproportionately affected. The Spanish Government has attempted to reverse the trend towards the early exit of

older workers in the framework of the pension system reform process set in 2011, especially through the Law on Measures to foster the continuity of working life for Older Workers and to promote Active Ageing, which was approved on March 2013.

In the United Kingdom, among the best practices, the following should be mentioned: The New Challenge (Employment and Training Specialists) 50+ Programme: Experience Counts, a scheme, co-funded by London Councils and the European Social Fund, for people over the age of 50 who are unemployed or economically inactive. It offers individuals one-to-one support in helping to explore their backgrounds and prior experience. In parallel, the organisation also works to build links with employers in the community and to place older workers within their organisations. It also offers IT courses to learn or upgrade IT skills; The Business Factory in North Tyneside, an initiative to support older people to develop new business ideas, with a specific focus on one-to-one support to older people in order to make them discover the skills they have acquired through life and work and to help them build the confidence to take forward new business ideas; the project Age UK - New Jobs for Old, which in 2012 helped 929 people aged 50-78 boost their job prospects on employability. and skills programmes combines a 12-week pre-employment programme to help each person become job-ready and includes updating IT skills. In London, mention should be made of the experience of the London based Older Peoples' Forum, set up and run by retired workers from ethnic minorities. This is a voluntary community venture aimed at assisting vulnerable people in their own homes and creating communal spaces for these people to come together in a London Borough. This forum uses networks within the local authority to ensure resources to provide for the services, and also involves younger people in providing awareness about the service and IT support, as well as providing regular interaction with all members. This initiative also provides for the exchange of skills and experience between older people who were active in organising the service, and younger people who have joined in to get experience.

3.3 Best Practices Involving Younger and Older People

In Spain, the competences on active labour market policies are decentralised at regional level. Thus, the Catalan Public Employment Services have shaped specific programmes focused on improving the employment prospects of young and older unemployed persons. Along these lines, the project Reinicia't launched in 2011 combines different employment guidance and training activities addressed to unemployed people over 50 years of age.

In Belgium, in the Flemish region, the government and social partners signed a new employment agreement in 2012 entitled *Career Agreement*.

This agreement addresses two groups of workers at risk of exclusion: young people leaving school without any qualifications and older workers. This agreement provides financial incentives for employers recruiting young and/or older workers and includes measures such as career guidance and training for workers.

Scheme. National 'best practices': main contents

Countries	Vulnerable age groups
	Youth
Austria	different territorial initiatives addressed to promote the transition from school to labour market
Belgium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • promotion of youth employment through the development of projects aimed at providing the necessary skills for entrepreneurship • promotion of government programs targeted to the inclusion of young workers (under 25 years) excluded from the compulsory education • projects aimed at intergenerational mentoring
Italy	Projects realized at regional level aimed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • guarantee incentives, grants and financial support to young people wishing to carry out training courses, buy a house or start a business activity; • finance several fellowships to support young people wanting to start a traineeship into local firms; • open specific social spaces to promote participation of young people.
Poland	promotion of specific projects on Generations in the workplace.
Spain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial vocational qualification programs for young people NEET.
UK	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • wide range of information and services, like benefits, loans and grants and help in the job search, applying for an apprenticeship and improving career skills and training

4 Social Dialogue as a Tool for Inclusion of Vulnerable Age Groups: Some Suggestion from Research

The results of the LinkAge fieldwork have highlighted a set of broad suggestions and specific proposals by different project actors and stakeholders involved in the research.

One of the main issues and proposals for change revealed by the LinkAge findings regards unions roles, and specifically the need for unions and social dialogue to prevent generational conflicts, due, on the one hand, to older workers believing that they are being made redundant so that young people may be hired, since they are cheaper to employ for companies, whereas young people may consider that the restrictions on early retirement of older workers are limiting their access to a stable position in the labour market.

According to data on labour market composition in the six countries analysed, even with relevant differences, the permanent precarization of the

work force is damaging both younger and older workers. For this reason, it is crucial that intergenerational dynamics should be incorporated within social dialogue to ensure promotion of intergenerational understanding and awareness of the vulnerability of both age groups, while it is also necessary to increase union membership among young workers.

People interviewed suggested expanding what unions have to offer with activities related to consulting, training, instructional meetings, providing advice or assisting prospective employees in finding employment to enlarge the spectrum of union members and enforce the unions' power. The need emerged to differentiate the negotiation system to provide better answers to the different needs of employees on the basis of their age, gender, nationality and educational level.

People interviewed suggested also that NGOs and policy makers should develop and support programmes for vulnerable age workers across Europe.

One of the most relevant issues to emerge was the need to develop training policies and prevent long-term unemployment of each age group, as well as the need to focus more attention on early school leavers, and offer programmes and schemes that combine training and employment in one 'package'. Another was the role of social dialogue in allowing unions and employers to deal effectively with the representation of all vulnerable workers.

4.1 Suggestions for Trade Unions

Considering the fall in union membership due to several reasons, mainly related to the precarization of employment in terms both of reduced rights and wage cuts, it is clear that union engagement should tackle the reduction of the present precarization via the mobilization of workers involved in vulnerable employment positions.

Along these lines, the destandardization of the employment relationship casts a shadow over the future of collective bargaining and union representativeness of all workers, not only of most vulnerable ones.

In this regard, unions should:

- a) increase their activity in sectors where young people are more employed, such as retail and other services activities, also in the IT sector;
- b) target vulnerable age groups in union strategies in order to direct activities to inactive people or the unemployed;
- c) direct schools to work and working transitions so as to strengthen the representation of workers during their lives;
- d) focus activities on younger generations and non-members so as to expand representativeness;

- e) focus attention on greater unionising of women workers belonging to vulnerable age groups and increasing their visibility within union structures;
- f) rethink and reshape the internal structure of unions on the basis of different needs expressed by workers.

4.2 Suggestions for Employers and Employers' Associations

Experts and workers interviewed highlighted the need to acknowledge the value of keeping older workers in employment against widespread prejudices. The promotion of older workers in workplaces should be encouraged as a means to improve intergenerational dialogue and the transmissions of knowledge between young and older workers.

In this regard, employers and employers' associations should:

- a) promote lifelong learning as a structural policy and means of promoting employment stability and productivity across different age groups of workers;
- b) increase investment on measures that address work-life balance, with a specific focus on older workers;
- c) reshape working time with the introduction of flexible working time arrangements for older workers in all sectors and job positions.
- d) formulate a more articulated system of care days availability to allow employees to look after dependent relatives, also including male older workers.

4.3 Suggestions for Policy Makers

The precarization of the labour market is not only increasing the current vulnerability of some groups of workers but it is also damaging the future position of workers involved in present processes, due to the increased weakness of the public pension system. For that reason both long-term unemployment and work discontinuities, affecting especially younger workers, should be considered particularly in a long-term view so to avoid increasing the vulnerability of a larger amount of people in next few decades. It has also been proved that another relevant issue is employment quality, which involves: work and income stability and permanent training to facilitate working transitions. In the six countries analysed, the issue related both to youth unemployment and older workers has been ignored for a long time. The analysis of public policies reveals that most youth employment programmes are focusing on cost-reduction strategies in order to encourage hiring by employers, without any consequent thought for the stabilization of the workers hired. The people interviewed made the

following suggestions for policy officers:

- a) labour market reforms should be more targeted to the younger generations most affected by unemployment (especially long-term unemployment) and employment instability;
- b) more attention should be paid to NEETs: the increasing number of people not employed either in education or training leads to an increase in vulnerable positions in the society as a whole;
- c) low-skilled workers, especially older workers, require particular attention: they are too young to get social security retirement benefits but too old to have access to a wide range of positions in the labour market. They are also extremely disadvantaged because of the care work burdens they usually have.
- d) programmes should take into account the employment prospects of older workers, focusing on activation measures and encompassing the provision of adequate income support together with job searching activities.

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