TRADE UNIONS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

CHALLENGES OF THE CHANGING AGE COMPOSITION OF UNIONS

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"Trade Unions enter the new Millennium with confidence in our principles and values, and in our ability to re-fashion, re-focus and continually re-energise our movement. And we must become stronger and more effective if we are to realise our vision"

(Extract from a Statement adopted by the 17th World Congress of the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions - Durban, April 2000.)

The ICFTU World Congress in 2000 launched the Millennium Review of international trade union priorities, strategies and structures, to stimulate a broad and inclusive debate about future directions for the international trade union movement.

The European Trade Union Institute was approached by the ICFTU to carry out research and analysis on four key issues relating to possibilities for and constraints on trade union action on a number of topics, specifically:

- the information economy
- young workers
- migrant workers
- trade union mergers

A researcher, Mr Marcus Kahmann, was contracted by the ETUI to carry out this research and produce a report on each of the topics. The reports were compiled following surveys of the available literature and interviews with trade unionists.

Given the complexity of the issues covered, and the limitations on time and resources, each report includes information from a few selected countries. The reports are not intended to be comprehensive – rather, they seek to stimulate debate and further analysis, including through identifying aspects on which new research would be of particular use. Comments and suggestions for follow-up work may be directed to the ETUI, (etui@etuc.org), to the ICFTU (press@icftu.org) or to the author (kahmannma@gmx.de).

For information on other aspects of the Millennium Review, including research reports on other topics, please contact the ICFTU (press@icftu.org).

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Contents

1. Introduction[1]

The decline in trade union membership can be described as a worldwide trend. Data on unionisation rates indicate, moreover, that this decline is particularly significant among young workers, in both absolute and relative terms. With this development, the very future of the labour movement is at stake. Recruiting, organising and representing young people prove to be some of the most difficult tasks with which trade unions are confronted today. The purpose of this report is twofold. It sets out, first of all, to give an account of the decline of youth membership worldwide and to explore the reasons underlying this decline. Secondly, it aims at portraying recent approaches to recruiting young workers and suggests future policy directions.

To these ends, the first section of the report will address the current labour market situation of young people worldwide. The hypothesis underlying this approach is that the labour market situation of young people is central to an understanding of the crisis of youth participation. Unfortunately, however, for much of the developing world the information and data available on youth employment are very poor. Accordingly, I will present the rather scant existing data, as published recently by the ILO (2000), and will develop a more in-depth-analysis of the employment situation of young people with reference to the European Union.

The second section takes up the issue of young people and trade unions. First it presents some indicators of the changing age composition of the trade unions and portrays two central approaches to explain the accelerating decline in youth membership. Due to the lack of youth membership data and explorative research on developing countries, this part will have to draw heavily on research from the industrialised world. Secondly, examples of recent trade union policies to reach out to and organise young people will then be given from the US and Canada and, in a more extensive manner, from Benin, India and Ecuador. For its strategic conclusions, the final section then will draw on the (predominantly western European) empirical findings and theoretical discussions concerning the aspects outlined in the previous section.

2. Young people and the labour market

2.1. Basic employment and demographic trends worldwide

2.1.1. The OECD countries

When in the 1970s the youth labour market deteriorated considerably, many experts expected that the problems would vanish as the ‘baby-boomer’ generation aged. Meanwhile, increased education and training were advocated as ways of substantially alleviating the problems of youth employment. Today’s youth cohort in the OECD countries is much smaller and better educated, but the problems have by no means disappeared. Youth unemployment (15-24 year-olds) is a problem in most of the countries, with figures in Spain (37.1%), Italy (33.6%), France (28.1%) in stark contrast to those in Switzerland (5.9%), the Netherlands (9.5%) and Germany (10%) between 1996 and 1997. In almost all of these countries it is young women who are more likely to be unemployed (notable exceptions: the UK and Sweden). Young people seem to have reacted to the deterioration of the youth labour market by increasingly enrolling in higher education. This increase has been more rapid in OECD countries other than the US. In addition to enrolling, young people shifted their preferred fields of study and occupation, e.g. in the U.S. students favoured business-related subjects over liberal arts and professional degrees over PhDs. In 1996, the rate of the population under 18 ranged between 18% in Italy and 19% in Germany and 28% in Ireland and 26% in the US.

[1] The author thanks all who shared with him their views and experiences on this issue.

Table 1: School attendance, employment and unemployment ratio in OECD countries

	(1) Proportion attending school		(2) Proportion is some sort of apprenticeship		(3) Proportion not attending school & not in the labour force		(4) Employment population ratio		(5) Unemploy-ment population ratio	
Men -18	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	26.4	41.6	18.1	11.9	2.1	3.8	66	53.7	17.2	16.3
Denmark	41.5	51.7	30.6	29.1	1.7	2.3	66.3	70.3	8	9.3
France	54.8	80.7	8.1	8.3	3.2	2.6	27.2	15	15.3	5.2
Germany	37.1	41.1	41.1	45.8	1	3.4	61.8	53	5	2.8
Ireland	41.8	63.5	6.1	2.4	1.3	3.4	43.5	27.1	18.3	8.6
Italy	56.4	68.7	0.4	0	2.9	6.4	30.8	18.9	12.2	8.1
Luxembourg	44	72.1	21.8	6.7	3.1	3.6	50.5	16.3	3.6	5.5
Netherlands	68.1	73	3.3	7.1	4.5	6.3	26.3	56.8	10.6	5.5
United Kingdom	29.2	34.6	15.1	12.4	2.4	11.4	59	61.8	21	12.4
United States	60.9	67.4			1.1	6.8	46.3	43.3	17.9	12.7
OECD unweighted average	48.8	63.6	11.3	11.5	3	4.7	43.8	35.4	13	9.1
Men -22	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	10.2	17.2	7.8	4.3	1.9	4.3	81.3	73.1	12.2	16.7
Denmark	20	33.2	7.8	10.9	3.7	6.7	75.3	66.9	8.4	8.1
France	15	43.1	0.4	2	2.6	3.3	72.6	42.1	14.3	15.6
Germany	23.8	26.1	5.1	9	1.4	4.2	68.3	66.4	8.5	8.4
Ireland	11.9	22.4	1.8	3.1	2.4	4	69.4	60.7	20.1	14.4
Italy	24.5	29.5	0.2	0.2	3.4	9.1	58.7	46	17.3	18.1
Luxembourg	16.8	28.2	1.9	1.3	1	1.7	82.2	65.3	2.9	5.9
Netherlands	39.6	48.5	2.4	3.9	2.8	4.9	58.2	72.7	16	3.6
United Kingdom	14.6	18.2	1.3	3.5	2.3	8.4	76	72.8	15.1	11.5
United States'	25.5	29.6			0.9	5.6	76.1	78.2	12.4	5
OECD unweighted average	21.5	32.7	2.3	2.9	2.8	4.6	67.6	60.6	14.4	12.1
Women -18	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	28.6	51.4	6.5	7.5	6.9	5.5	59.3	50.9	14.6	17.5
Denmark	50.2	78.3	21.3	6.1	3.3	1.7	57.3	54.4	7.1	12.1
France	61	86.5	2.3	3.8	4.4	2.7	16.3	6.3	20.5	5.7
Germany	43.3	49.4	29.6	35.6	2.5	5.5	53.1	39.6	6.6	4.1
Ireland	50.6	77	1.4	1	2.2	3.8	37.1	16.4	18.6	7.9
Italy	54.3	75.3	0.4	0.2	11.9	9	20.5	10.3	16.6	7.2
Luxembourg	45.4	81	7.5	2.1	3.4	1.9	50.3	15.4	3	2.2
Netherlands	65.9	78	0.8	5.3	4.8	4.9	27.4	54	12.8	7.8

	(1) Proportion attending school		(2) Proportion is some sort of apprenticeship		(3) Proportion not attending school & not in the labour force		(4) Employment population ratio		(5) Unemploy-ment population ratio	
United Kingdom	31.5	41.9	4.4	6.1	10.8	16.2	56.4	59.5	14.9	7.2
United States'	56.2	65.7			8.6	11.6	42.5	47.1	17.7	8
OECD unweighted average	50.6	70.6	5.8	6.5	8.1	5.8	36.6	29.9	13.5	9.4
Women -22	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	10.8	20.3	3.4	4	20.5	13.5	67.2	67.9	7.7	11.8
Denmark	17.4	38.8	15.3	14	7.5	6.5	73.4	62.7	11.1	11.6
France	16.7	44.3	0.2	1.5	14.4	7.8	59.1	38.5	16.1	17.8
Germany	19.7	23.7	3.4	9.2	12.7	15.2	63.3	59.5	7.2	7.4
Ireland'	7.1	22	0.7	2.4	16	7.6	69	62.5	10.4	8.9
Italy	19.5	39.9	0.2	0.3	22.7	16.5	41.3	30.2	20	18.2
Luxembourg	8.7	24.5	1.3	1.8	13	9.6	78.6	61.5	0.5	3.9
Netherlands	24	48.2	1.1	1.2	14	8.6	64.3	72.6	9.3	4.8
United Kingdom	9.2	18.2	0.8	1.6	26.1	21.4	59.4	63.7	10.1	6.8
United States	19.8	31.7			15.8	19.8	65.5	61.3	11.3	6.9
OECD unweighted average	17.4	35.1	2.1	2.9	18.2	11.2	57.6	53.6	12.4	11.6
Total -18	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	27.5	46.4	12.3	9.7	4.5	4.6	62.6	52.3	15.9	16.9
Denmark	45.8	66.1	26	16.6	2.5	2	61.9	61.7	7.5	10.8
France	58	83.5	5.1	6.1	3.8	2.6	21.5	10.8	18	5.4
Germany	40.2	45	35.3	40.9	1.7	4.4	57.4	46.6	5.8	3.4
Ireland'	46.1	69.8	3.8	1.7	1.7	3.6	40.3	22.1	18.4	8.3
Italy	55.3	71.8	0.4	0.1	7.4	7.7	25.6	14.8	14.4	7.6
Luxembourg	44.6	76.7	15	4.3	3.2	2.7	50.4	15.8	3.3	3.9
Netherlands	67	75.6	2	6.2	4.7	5.6	26.9	55.3	11.7	6.7
United Kingdom	30.3	38.2	9.8	9.4	6.6	13.7	57.8	60.7	17.9	9.9
United States	58.6	66.6			4.7	9.2	44.4	45.2	17.8	10.4
OECD unweighted average	49.7	67.1	8.6	8.9	5.6	5.2	40.2	32.6	13.3	9.3
Total -22	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**	**1984**	**1997**
Australia	10.5	18.8	5.5	4.1	11.5	8.9	74.1	70.5	9.9	14.3
Denmark	18.7	35.7	11.5	12.3	5.6	6.6	74.3	65	9.7	9.7
France	15.9	43.7	0.3	1.8	9	5.7	65.2	40.2	15.3	16.8
Germany	21.8	24.9	4.3	9.1	7	9.7	65.8	62.9	7.9	7.9
Ireland	9.7	22.2	1.3	2.7	8.8	5.8	69.2	61.6	15.5	11.6
Italy	21.9	34.8	0.2	0.3	13.3	12.9	49.8	38	18.7	18.2
Luxembourg	12.6	26.4	1.6	1.5	7.2	5.5	80.3	63.5	1.7	4.9
Netherlands	31.9	48.3	1.8	2.6	8.4	6.7	61.2	72.6	12.7	4.2
United Kingdom	12	18.2	1.1	2.6	13.9	14.7	67.9	68.4	12.7	9.2
United States	22.5	30.6			8.8	12.6	70.5	69.9	11.8	6
OECD unweighted average	19.4	33.9	2.2	2.8	10.7	7.9	62.4	57.1	13.4	11.8

***Source**: ILO (2000)*

2.1.2. Eastern transformation countries

According to the ILO (2000), the most reliable data on the labour market situation may be found for the former German Democratic Republic as well as Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic, who have recently joined the OECD. From the data on general indicators of demographics, living standards and labour markets, it is apparent that the central Asian republics such as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan are much poorer than the eastern European transformation countries. In 1996, their gross per capita national product ranged between US $ 630, US $ 480 and US $ 340 respectively. Notably Slovenia, with a GNP per capita of US $ 9.240, almost equals EU member Portugal (Table 1). In comparison with the OECD countries, the proportion of people under 18 is significantly higher (25% in CEECs in 1997, around 20% in western Europe) and has been rising in most of these countries in the 1990s. As was found in the OECD countries, the level of youth unemployment is generally between two and four times higher, with the highest ratio in Romania (4.7 times).

The highest unemployment rates among 15 to 24 year-olds are found in Macedonia (49.3%), Bulgaria (26.3%) and Lithuania (26.2%). Rates are relatively low in Estonia (1.8%), Belarus (5.9%) and the Czech Republic (8.4%) (Table 2). Concerning the gender pattern of rates of unemployment, the female rates are higher in Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Macedonia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania and Slovakia, whereas they are lower in Hungary, Latvia, Russia and Ukraine.

Data indicate that the proportion of 20-24 year olds in the ‘third-level’ or higher education has declined in Belarus, Latvia, Russia and Ukraine, but increased strongly in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Estonia and, to a lesser extent, elsewhere (ILO 2000: 21). These changes have to be seen in the light of dramatic increases in employment rates as well as falling real wages and a considerable widening of the overall wage distribution.

Table 2: Youth unemployment rates in Asia, Europe and Australasia

		Age Specific Unemployment Rates					Male and Female Unemployment Rates by Age %					
Year	COUNTRY	Age	All	Male	Female	15-24 yrs	>=25yrs	Ratio	Age 25 and over		Ages 15-24	
1997	Israel	15+	7.7	6.8	8.8	14.9	6.3	2.4	7.2	5.7	16	13.9
1997	Japan	15+	3.4	3.4	3.4	6.6	2.9	2.3	2.9	2.9	6.3	6.9
1997	Korea, Republic of	15+	2.6	2.8	2.3	7.7	1.9	4.1		2.2	6.6	9.4
1997	Macau	14+	3.1	3.7	2.5	8	2.6	3.1	2.2	3	5.3	10.8
1995	Pakistan	10+	5.4	4.1	13.7	9	3.7	2.4	12.6	2.4	18.1	7.6
1997	Philippines	15+	7.9	7.5	8.5	15.7	5.5	2.9	5.7	5.5	18.5	14.1
1997	Singapore	15+	2.4	2.4	2.4	5.1	2	2.6	1.8	2.2	5.6	4.5
1996	Sri Lanka	10+	11.3	8	17.6	24.7	6	4.1	9.8	4	31.2	20.2
1991	Syrian Arab Republic	10+	6.8	5.2	14							
1997	Tajikistan	...	2.7	2.4	2.9							
1997	Thailand	13+	0.9	0.9	0.9	2.2	0.5	4.4	0.7	0.4	1.8	2.5
1995	Uzbekistan	...	0.4	0.3	0.5							
EUROPE – WEST												
1996	Austria	15+	5.3	5.3	5.2	6.5	4.1	1.6	4.4	3.9	7.6	5.5
1997	Belgium	15+	9	7.1	11.5	21.3	7.6	2.8	9.9	6	25.7	17.6
1997	Denmark	15+	5.4	4.5	6.4	8.1	4.8	1.7	5.7	4.1	9.9	6.6
1997	Finland	15-74	14.4	13.8	15.1	24.8	13	1.9	13.6	12.4	26.6	23.3
1997	France	15+	12.3	10.8	14.2	28.1	10.9	2.6	12.5	9.5	32.8	24.6
1997	Germany	15+	9.8	8.9	10.9	10	9.7	1	11.1	8.7	9.6	10.3
1997	Greece	15+	9.6	6.2	14.8	31	6.8	4.6	10.6	4.5	40.6	22.2
1997	Iceland	16-74	3.9	3.3	4.5	7.4	3.2	2.3	3.9	2.5	6.7	8.1
1997	Ireland	15+	10.3	10.3	10.3	16.1	9	1.8	8.9	9	15.2	16.9
1993	Isle of Man	...	5	6.3	3.1							
1997	Italy	15+	12.5	9.7	16.9	33.6	9.1	3.7	12.7	7	39.3	29.1
1997	Luxembourg	15+	2.5	1.8	3.6	7.3	2	3.7	2.8	1.5	9.2	5.6
1997	Malta	16-61	5	5.8	2.8	5.2	3.5	1.5	2	3.8	2.8	7.2
1997	Netherlands	15+	5.5	4.4	7	9.5	5.5	1.7	6.9	4.4	10	9.1
1997	Norway	16+	4.1	4	4.3	10.6	3.1	3.4	3.2	3	11.1	10.1
1997	Poland	15+	11.2	9.5	13.2	24.6	9.4	11.2	7.8	28	21.9	
1996	Portugal	15+	7.5	6.6	8.5	11.8	5.3	2.2	5.7	5	12.4	11.3
1997	San Marino	14+	4.4	1.9	7.3							
1997	Spain	16+	20.6	15.8	28.3	37.1	17.2	2.2	24.1	13.1	46.1	30.3
1997	Switzerland	15+	4.1	4.3	3.9	5.9	3.8	1.6	3.9	3.7	3.8	7.9
1997	Sweden	16+	7.9	8.3	7.5	15.4	7	2.2	6.7	7.4	14.3	16.3
1997	Turkey	15+	6.4	6	7.4	15.4	3.9	3.9	4	3.9	17.5	14.2
1997	United Kingdom	16+	7.1	8.1	5.8	13.5	5.9	2.3	4.7	6.8	11	15.6
EUROPE – EAST												
1995	Belarus	...	2.7	2.2	3.3	5.9	1.9	2.5	1.3	7.6	4.3	
1996	Bulgaria	15+	14.2	14.2	14.1	26.3	7	8.2	5.8	27.4	25.1	
1993	Croatia	...	16.8	14	20.1	22.6	8.7	10.3	7.4	26.5	19.6	
1997	Czech Republic	15+	4.7	3.8	5.8	8.4	4	5	3.1	9.9	7.3	
1996	Estonia	15-69	10	10.7	9.2	1.8	0.5	0.6	0.5	1.8	1.8	
1997	Hungary	15-74	8.7	9.5	7.7	15.9	7.4	6.7	8.1	14.5	16.9	
1997	Latvia	15+	14.4	14.3	14.6	27	14.4	14	14.8	28	26.4	
1997	Lithuania	...	6.7	6.6	6.9	26.2	12.1	12.8	11.5	23	28.3	
1996	Macedonia	...	38.8	35	44.5	49.3	27.1	32.2	23.9	54.4	45.7	
1997	Romania	15+	6	5.7	6.4	17.8	3.8	4	3.7	21	15.5	
1996	Russian Federation	15-72	9.3	9.6	9	16.6	6.9	6.4	7.5	17.1	16.2	

		Age Specific Unemployment Rates					Male and Female Unemployment Rates by Age %					
Year	COUNTRY	Age	All	Male	Female	15-24 yrs	>=25yrs	Ratio	Age 25 and over		Ages 15-24	
1997	Slovakia	15+	11.6	10.8	12.5	22.2	9.5	10.7	8.5	21.9	22.5	
1997	Slovenia	15+	7.1	7	7.3	18.1	5.2	5.2	5.3	20	16.5	
1997	Ukraine	15-70	8.9	9.5	8.4	14.3	4.3	3.8	4.8	12.7	16	
AUSTRALASIA												
1997	Australia	15+	8.4	8.6	8.1	15.9	6.6	6.3	6.8	14.6	17.2	
1997	New Zealand	15+	6.7	6.6	6.7	13	5.1	5.1	5.1	12.9	13.1	

***Source**: ILO (2000)*

2.1.3. Latin America

Latin American countries show a considerable variation on a number of socio-economic factors. For example, the country with the highest gross national product (GNP) per capita in 1996 was Argentina (US $ 8,380), the lowest Nicaragua (US $ 380) (Table 1). Similar differences are found in other social indicators, such as maternal and under-5 mortality rates (ILO 2000: 59-60). The difference in the proportion of the population that is young (under 18) shows an enormous variation (50% in Nicaragua to a low 28% in Uruguay). Although the size of the youth population is generally declining relative to the adult population, it has been increasing in Bolivia, Nicaragua and Paraguay.

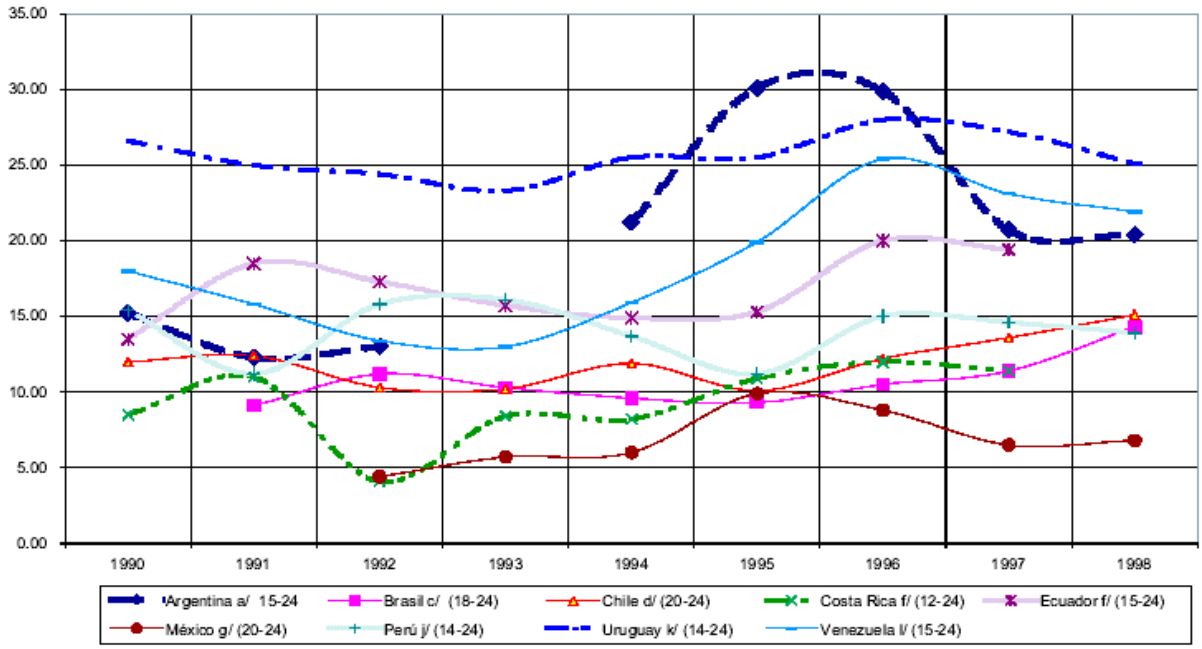
The growth of the informal economy is of particular concern to the Latin American countries and their trade unions. It is estimated that 85% of all new jobs are created in the informal economy. Unemployment rates among the young (15-24 year olds) range from 24.6% in Argentina, 35.1% in Colombia, 38.1% in Barbados or 27.3% in Panama to 7% in Bolivia or 6.6% in Mexico (Table 3). On the average youth unemployment rates are approximately twice as high as adult rates in most countries. As Figure 1 shows, youth unemployment was on the increase during the late 1990s.

Table 3: Youth unemployment rates in Africa and the Americas

		Age Specific Unemployment Rates					Male and Female Unemployment Rates by Age %					
Year	COUNTRY	Age	All	Male	Female	15-24 yrs	>=25yrs	Ratio	Age 25 and over		Ages 15-24	
AFRICA												
1997	Algeria	15+	26.4	26.9	24	38.7	7.9	4.9	2.1	9.3	14.4	46.2
1995	Botswana	12+	21.5	19.4	23.9							
1995	Egypt	12-64	11.3	7.6		34.4	4.4	7.8	9.8	3	59	24.5
1995	Mauritius	12+	9.8	7.8	13.9	23.8	5.8	4.1	9.5	4.1	28.1	21.4
AMERICAS												
1991	Anguilla	15+	7.2	6.3	9							
1991	Antigua and Barbuda	15+	6	6.4	5.6							
1996	Argentina	10+	16.3	15.4	17.6	24.6	10.4	2.4	12.6	9.2	26.2	23.5
1994	Aruba	15+	6.5	5.4	7.9							
1995	Bahamas	15+	11.1	10.3	12	23.7	10.1	2.3	9	7.4	23.6	18.1
1995	Barbados	15+	19.7	16.5	22.9	38.1	15.1	2.5	18.1	12.1	43.2	33.3
1996	Belize	14+	13.8	11.7	18.6	25.6	9.6	2.7	12.2	8.4	33.3	21.9
1996	Bolivia	10+	4.2	3.7	4.5	7	3.4	2.1	3.3	3.5	8.5	5.5
1996	Brazil	10+	6.9	5.7	8.8	12.6	4.6	2.7	6	3.7	16.1	10.3
1997	Canada	15+	9.2	9.2	9.2	16.7	7.8	2.1	7.8	7.8	15.7	17.6
1997	Colombia	12+	12.1	9.8	15.1	35.1	5.8	6.1	6.7	5	42.3	28.6
1997	Costa Rica	12+	5.7	4.9	7.5	5.4	1.8	3	2.5	1.5	7.3	4.4
1997	Chile	15+	5.3	4.7	6.6	13	4	3.3	4.9	3.5	14.7	12
1997	Dominican Republic	14+	15.9	9.5	28.6	32	8.7	3.7	17.8	4.9	59.4	19.8
1997	Ecuador	10+	9.2	7	12.7	18.9	6.2	3	8.8	4.5	24.5	15.1
1997	El Salvador	10+	8	9.5	5.3	13.1	5.2	2.5	3.8	6.1	14.3	12.5
1991	Grenada	15+	13.9	14.6	12.7							
1989	Guadeloupe	16+	24	16	34	29.5	13.5	2.2	18.7	9.6	40.4	21.1
1992	Guyana	15+	11.7	8.4	18.1							
1991	French Guiana	16+	9.7	8.2	11.6							
1997	Honduras	10+	3.2	3.2	3.2	10.6	1.3	8.2	1	1.4	13.3	9.5
1996	Jamaica	14+	16	9.9	23	35.2	8.5	4.1	12.6	4.9	47.7	25.3
1997	Mexico	15+	3.5	2.9	4.7	6.6	2.4	2.8	3.3	2	8.4	5.6
1997	Nicaragua	10+	13.3	12.6	14.8	11.1	11.9	0.9	16.4	9.6	16.7	8.6
1996	Panama	15+	14.3	11.3	20	27.3	9.9	2.8	15.5	6.9	35.6	23
1996	Paraguay	10+	8.2	7.8	8.6	6	2.4	2.5	4.4	1.7	7.9	5.2
1997	Peru	14+	7.7	6.8	8.9	13.2	5.2	2.5	6	4.6	14.2	12.4
1997	Puerto Rico	16+	13.5	14.4	12.1	26.4	11.6	2.3	8.5	13.7	23.3	28.3
1996	Saint Lucia	15+	16.3	13.8	19.3							
1991	St.Vincent & the Grenadines	15+	19.8	18.4	22.1							
1996	Suriname	15+	10.9	7.9	16.4	26.1	4.4	5.9	12.4	2.8	28.2	25.1
1996	Trinidad and Tobago	15+	16.2	13.2	21	28.5	12.7	2.2	16.5	10.4	36	23.5
1997	United States	16+	4.9	4.9	5	11.3	3.8	3	3.9	3.6	10.7	11.8
1995	Uruguay	14+	10.2	8	13.2	24.6	6.2	4				
1995	Venezuela	15+	10.3	9	12.8	19.1	7.6	2.5	9.1	6.9	24.5	16.7
1991	British Virgin Islands	15+	3.3	3.4	3.1							

***Source**: ILO 2000*

Figure 1:Youth unemployment 1990-1997 in selected Latin American countries



***Source**: ILO 2000*

Although no specific data is available, it seems likely that young workers are particularly affected by the rising income inequality that could be observed in Brazil, Chile and Colombia and the associated spread of poverty. Regarding the overall qualification of the region's young workforce, most countries witnessed an increase in the proportion of the 20-24 year-olds going to college, notably among women (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Growth per annum in higher education, 1990-95

	Men	Women
Bahamas	-7.1	5.4
Brazil	2.4	3.0
Chile	4.9	4.3
Colombia	3.8	3.3
Dominica	0.8	12.4
El Salvador	1.7	16.2
Guyana	5.6	10.6
Honduras	5.3	6.2
Mexico	2.9	6.0
Nicaragua	9.7	5.4
Trinidad & Tobago	4.3	8

***Source**: ILO (2000)*

2.1.4. Africa

The lack of reliable data makes it difficult to evaluate the situation of young people in the labour market in many African countries. As in other regions, differences in socio-economic parameters are pronounced. For example, per capita GNP in Gabon was US $ 3,950, in Mozambique US $ 80; primary school enrolment was 24% in Eritrea and 96% in Botswana. The ILO (2000) presents unemployment rates for the 15 to 24 year-olds for only a few countries, but the numbers given are rather high (Algeria (38.7%), Egypt (34.4%), Mauritius (23.8%) (Table 3). Women are generally more likely to be unemployed than men. The proportion of young people who are economically active has been declining all over the region between 1980 and 1995 (and more drastically among men than women), particularly among 15-19 year-olds. To some extent this seems due to the growth in the proportion of young people in 'third-level' or higher education, more notably of women. But youth unemployment may also play a role here. Female unemployment rates are reported to be generally higher than male rates. The high rate of unemployment is of particular concern, as in many countries the young constitute a very high proportion both of the total population and of the total of unemployed people, comprising more than half of the unemployed in Africa (ILO 2000: 32).[2] The relationship between unemployment and educational participation is mixed: the unemployment rates for the least and the most highly educated tend to be lower than for those with intermediate levels of education (ILO 2000: 32).

Inflation and restrictive macroeconomic policies have especially harmed youth. "The main feature of the African labour market is the slow growth of employment in the formal sector and the retrenchment of labour in the course of implementing structural adjustment. In response, the non-formal sectors have not only acted as residual sectors but also as labour absorbers in the last resort. Such structure of wages and unemployment can have some perverse effects on youth: a) high unemployment rates may discourage youths from investing in education and training as investment appears wasted; b) the association of increasing age with increasing probability of employment may result in a passive approach to job search" (ILO 2000: 32-3). As the World Bank and the IMF forced African countries to reduce public sector employment, jobs could not be generated in this area.

2.1.5. Asia

In Asia, regional differences area also pronounced. This holds in terms of GNP (Singapore US $ 30,550, Japan 40,940 US $ and Nepal US $ 210, Bangladesh US $ 260; Vietnam 290 US $) as well as indicators such as maternal and infancy mortality rates (ILO 2000). The share of the population under 18 varies, too: from 20% in Japan, to 25% in Australia and 26% in Singapore to 52% in the Republic of Laos, 49% in Pakistan and 48% in Bangladesh. Youth unemployment varies between a high 24.7% in Sri Lanka and 15.7% in the Philippines to 5.1% in Singapore (Table 2). Women are generally more likely to be unemployed than men (ibid.). As in Africa, but probably to an extent that is less pronounced, there has been a growth in the proportion of young people (notably women) in 'third-level' or higher education. In Indonesia, for example, among a third of young people who have completed primary schooling, more than a third have acquired a junior high school degree and about a fifth possessed senior high school degrees. In Asia, unemployment tends to be higher amongst the more qualified than the less qualified. In rural areas, underemployment is particularly widespread. In some Asian countries the proportion of

[2] Inadequate and incomplete data make cross-country comparison difficult (ILO 2000), as (1) cross-country variations in the definition of youth occur; (2) cross-country differences in the measurement of employment, unemployment and underemployment are frequent; (3) data-gathering and survey systems vary from country to country.

underemployed youth in rural areas is more than twice as high as in the urban areas. As the financial and resulting socio-economic crisis in Asia has shown, young people are the most vulnerable participants in the labour market, as they are the first to be dismissed and face greater difficulties in finding new jobs.

To sum up, the comparable data available points at the following characteristics of youth employment world-wide:

- Young people are considerably more prone to unemployment. Their risk tends be 2 to 4 times higher than of adults. In times of economic crisis they are regularly the first affected by dismissals.
- In many countries education levels have risen. It seems as if women have to some extent caught up with men, at least in higher education (ILO 2000: 30).
- However, third-level or higher education does not constitute protection from unemployment. In a number of countries in the developed as well as in the developing world the labour market is particularly tight for the well qualified.
- Youth labour market problems tend to be offset by prolonged schooling.
- The informalisation of the economy in the developing countries (and, to a much lesser extent, in parts of the developed countries, too (Wilpert 1998)) particularly affects the employment of young people.

The following section will further specify characteristics and issues of youth employment, drawing on more extensive material available for the European Union.

2.2. Focus on the characteristics of youth employment: the case of the European Union[3]

2.2.1. Education and labour market participation

Apart from Ireland, Portugal and Spain, where the proportion of young people in the population remains high (between 16.1% and 17.7%), the 15-24 age group is falling in most EU member states. In this sense, the European development contrasts with the worldwide increase of the youth population. In accordance with the general picture in the OECD countries, educational levels have risen in the European Union. This holds, on the one hand, for the attendance of initial training courses by young people aged between 15 and 19 years. In 1997, it varied between 94% in Belgium, 93% in Germany and France and 71% in the UK (Table 4). In the 20-24 age group the percentages vary from a low of 24% in the UK to a high of 50% in Finland or 49% in the Netherlands. As noted by Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000), the increase of young people doing their initial training or continuing their studies has been most pronounced in Belgium, France and Spain, while in the Netherlands and the Nordic countries changes have been minimal. Here, education rates have traditionally been high. The average level of education among young Europeans is considerably higher than amongst the older generations. This holds particularly for women.

Because of the increasing time spent in education, as well as the demographic decline of the age group, the number of young people participating in the labour market is decreasing in the EU. Denmark and, to some extent, the Netherlands and the UK are an exception to this development. In these countries, participation rates are relatively close to the overall activity rate.

[3] This chapter draws to a considerable extent on a paper prepared by A. Serrano Pascual and J. Waddington (2000) for the ETUI Youth Committee. I thank the authors for generously letting me use their tables and figures.

Table 4: 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; cited from Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000

2.2.2. Trends in unemployment

In comparison with other groups, young people are particularly affected by the employment crisis in the European Union. Although youth unemployment has declined slowly in recent years (partly due to extended education time), it remains almost twice as high as adult unemployment (8.8% in 2000), with youth unemployment at an average level of 16.9% for the EU as a whole in 2000. The high incidence of unemployment amongst young people may be partly explained by the segmentation of the labour market, the demand for higher qualifications, as well as the general crisis in employment. Youth unemployment tends to be more serious in those countries where the overall unemployment rate is also high. (Table 5). Youth unemployment tends to rise more sharply than the overall rates in times of recession and to fall more rapidly in times of growth.

In 2000, Greece, Italy and Spain had the highest unemployment rates in the EU, ranging between 28.3% and 32.4%. In a number of countries, such as Austria (5.6%), Denmark (5.6%), Luxembourg (5.3%) and The Netherlands (4.7%), youth unemployment was below 6%. It has to be added that within EU countries, notably Italy and Finland, enormous regional differences in youth unemployment occurred. The most pronounced differences are found in Finland, from 1.7% in the region of Åland to 15.5% in that of Itae-Suomi; in Italy from 3.1% in Trentino-Alto Adige to 27.7% in Calabria; in France from 5.3% in Alsace to 33.1% in Réunion (Eurostat 2001).

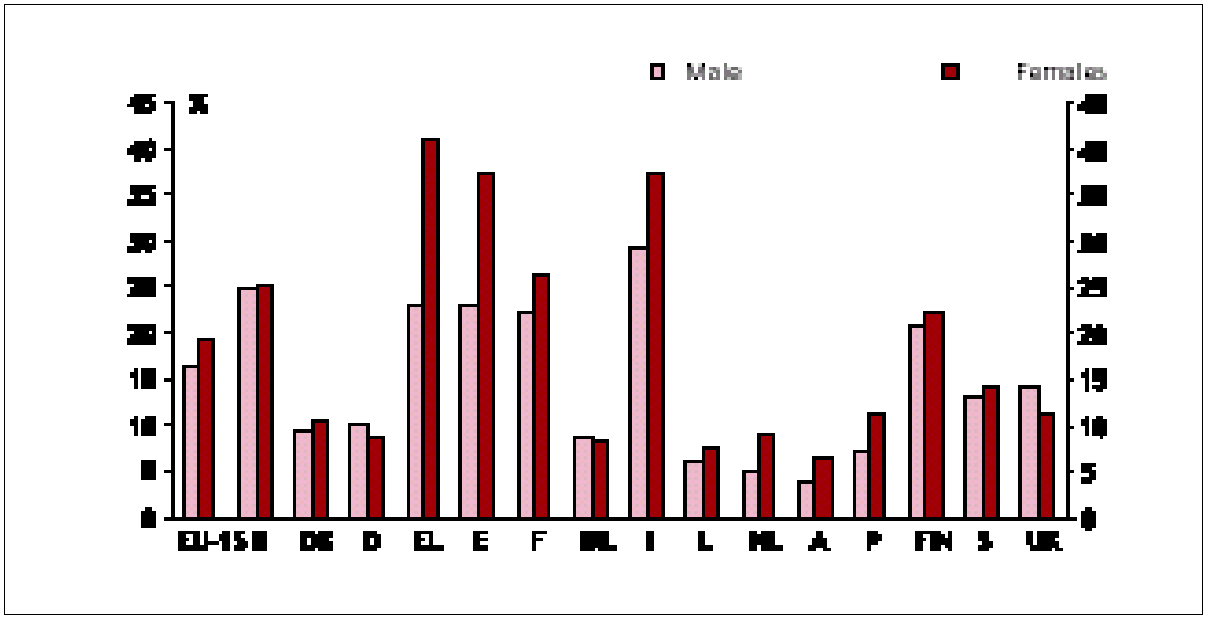
Table 5: Unemployment of young people by country, 2000

	Unemployment rate in %	Youth unemployment in %
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; cited from Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000.
Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

In most of the EU countries, women were more affected by unemployment than men (Figure 3).

Figure 3: Youth unemployment rates (15 – 24 years) by sex, 1999



***Source**: Eurostat: In brief: The social situation in the European Union 2001*

2.2.3. Employment characteristics

These unemployment rates do not, however, capture the deterioration of working conditions, particularly in Spain and the UK. As Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000: 11-2) note: "Although young people are better qualified, most young people still find it difficult to find work, and even if they are successful, they often have only temporary contracts and [have] 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 were 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".

As regards atypical forms of employment, in recent years the European Union has seen an increase in part-time work and temporary contracts (Table 6). In many countries these have indeed become the norm for young employees. Part-time work is particularly prevalent among young people in the Netherlands (59.9%) and Sweden (43.8%), but very much less so in Austria (9.7%) and Portugal (7.7%). Temporary employment is particularly common in Spain. Here, 70.1% of the population aged under 25 are employed on fixed-term contracts. Among the 25-30 year-olds it is still 50% (Fondeur and Lefresne 1999). But in Germany (53.1%) and France (54.3%) too, temporary contracts are the rule rather than the exception for young workers under 25. The low percentage for the UK (12.5%) has to be seen in the light of its labour law provisions: during the first two years the employer is entirely free to dismiss the young worker. Apart from Italy, temporary contracts are more common among low-qualified young people (ibid.).

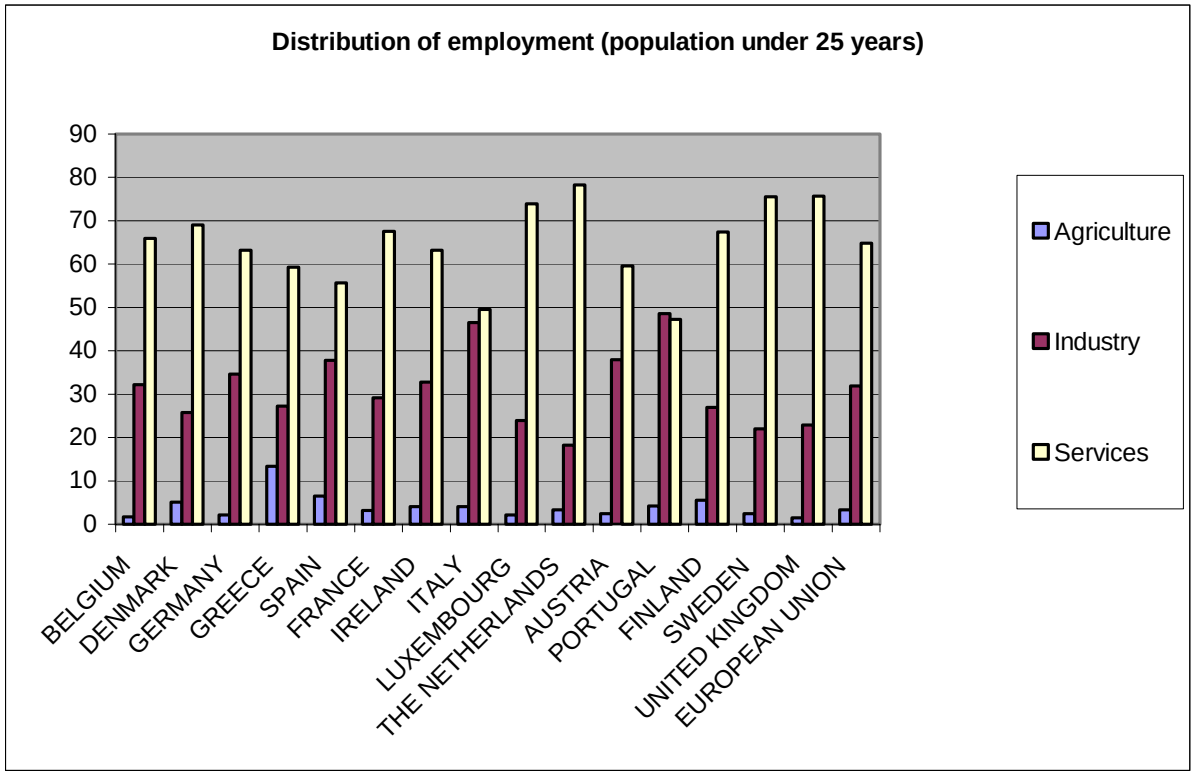
Table 6: 'Atypical' forms of employment, 1999

	Fixed term contract in %		Part time contract in %	
	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; cited from Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000)
Note: 1, Data refer to 1998

Over the last two decades the European union has witnessed a marked shift in the structure of the labour market towards a tertiary economy and significant declines in the agricultural and industrial sectors. In 1999, over 66% of the population was employed in the service sector. This sector is particularly large in Luxembourg (76.1%) and the Netherlands (74.5%), but smaller in southern Europe, particularly in Greece (59.2%) and Portugal (59.2%). As Figure 4 shows, the trend towards a tertiary economy is reproduced among young people.

Figure 4: Distribution of employment (population under 25 years)



Source: Labour Force Survey, 1999, Statistic in Focus, Theme 3, 5/2000; cited from Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000.

Le Queux (2001) elaborated the following characteristics of the youth labour market for the Australian context, but there is evidence that they apply to some considerable extent to the situation in the Europe Union:[4]

- The cyclical sensitivity of the youth labour market. Economic recession usually hits young people first and consequently increases competition for such jobs.
- Low-training, low skill and non-career path characteristics of youth jobs, due to the often part-time and casual nature of many youth jobs. For those who are not in education it is difficult to establish a career or to progress to higher earnings.
- Related to the above, the high turnover of many youth jobs.
- The institutionalisation of a discriminatory wage structure based on age, meant to encourage employers' investment in training. In many instances it supports low-paid jobs that are terminated once young people acquire adult status.
- The lack of entitlement and protection for youth. In many cases young persons have limited access to non-wage benefits and to employment protection as a result of their youth status.

[4] Without further discussing this issue here, it may be said that such similarities exist with regard to cyclical sensitivity, turnover, discrimination on wage and social protection.

3. Young people and trade unions

3.1. Quantitative aspects: the changing age composition of unions

Data on union membership on a worldwide level is extremely scarce and uneven. This holds even more for young people. Where there is data, problems of comparability arise with different age definitions of 'young' or whether the data is given in absolute numbers or relative to the working youth population (union density). As suggested by Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000) for the European Union (a suggestion that should be extended to the ICFTU), a concerted attempt to map the location of young trade union members should be started with the compilation of a consistent data series.

A recent survey of 236 ICFTU affiliates and the Global Union Federations (GUFs) produced a rather heterogeneous picture of youth membership. Due to the lack of respondents on the youth question (44) and further demographic and socio-economic variables, any generalising conclusions about the state of youth membership should be avoided. The collected data (Table 7) give rise to two questions: first, does union size have a negative impact on the propensity to have young members? – Whatever the answer to this question, it is alarming for a representative body such as the ICFTU that some of its big affiliates (HMS India; LO Norway; AKAVA Finland) have only marginal percentages of young members (1.4%; 3.8%; 0.9%). Secondly, to what extent does the level of socio-economic development influence young people's membership? – It seems that the trade unions in the EU have – with the notable exception of Spain's CC.OO. – particular problems in attracting young workers. To a lesser degree, this appears to be the case in Central and Eastern Europe also. The fact that the relationship is not straightforward is indicated by the statistical evidence that, in developing countries such as Gabon, Pakistan, India or Singapore (with lower age entry levels in the labour market and a bigger share of youth of the total population), unionisation is equally a problem.

Table 7: Young members in ICFTU-affiliated trade unions, 2001

	Organisation	KEY	Total Membership	TotalU25	Percentage of Total Membership
< 10,000 members					
	Dominica, DTU	DTU	800	25	3,1
	Cook Islands, CIWA	CIWA	700	54	7,7
	Tonga Islands, FITA/TNA	FITA/TNA	578	290	50,2
	St. Lucia, SWGWTU	SWGWTU	1200	300	25,0
	Antigua, ABPSA	ABPSA	365	212	58,1
	Samoa, STUC	STUC	2230	370	16,6
	Gambia, GWU	GWU	3000	1000	33,3
	Cyprus, Türk-Sen	TÜRK-SEN	3005	1830	60,9
	Vatican, ADLV	ADLV	650	70	10,8
	San Marino, CDLS	CDLS	3936	202	5,1
	Antigua, AWU	ABWU	4000	1930	48,3
	Bermuda, BIU	BIU	5000	4035	80,7
	Lebanon, Petroleum	FPTUL	1000	60	6,0
				mean value	31,2
10,000 – 100,000 members					
	Nicaragua, CUS	CUS	32000	11000	34,4
	Guinea, ONSLG	ONSLG	43500	17293	39,8
	Gabon, CGSL	CGSL	19000	500	2,6
	Luxembourg, CGTL	CGTL	56427	2792	4,9
	Malta, GWU	GWU/MLT	36000	6041	16,8
	Benin, CSA	CSA	51000	4750	9,3
	Rwanda, CESTRAR	CESTRAR	72000	23000	31,9
	Estonia, EAKL	EAKL	57000	20300	35,6
	Fiji, FTUC	FTUC	42000	14490	34,5
				mean value	23,3
100,000-1,000.000 members					
	Mali, UNTM	UNTM	122000	20000	16,4
	Finland, AKAVA	AKAVA	269800	2440	0,9
	Hungary, Liga	LIGA	101000	13733	13,6
	Pakistan, PNFTU	PNFTU	250000	12000	4,8
	Singapore, SNTUC	SNTUC	225000	13000	5,8
	Pakistan, APFOL	APFOL	291575	21010	7,2
	Bangladesh, BJSL	BMSF	191428	44800	23,4
	Croatia, UATUC	UATUC	345927	26682	7,7
	Portugal, UGT-P	UGT-P	251000	31000	12,4
	Norway, LO	LO-N	817717	31481	3,8
	Finland, STTK	STTK	452000	45000	10,0
	Bulgaria, CITUB	CITUB	400000	60000	15,0
	Turkey, TURK-IS	TÜRK-IS	250000	62500	25,0
	Spain, CC.OO	CCOO	600000	240000	40,0
	Philippines, TUCP	TUCP	475000	99250	20,9
				mean value	14,7
> 1,000,000 members					
	India, HMS	HMS	5020000	70000	1,4
	Netherlands, FNV	FNV	1226566	98123	8,0
	Sweden, LO	LO-S	1753816	183895	10,5
				mean value	6,6

***Source**: ICFTU*

More detailed evidence available from the European Union shows two points: first, unionisation rates are lower among young workers than among their older counterparts. In Britain and the Netherlands (Tables 8 & 9), 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.

Table 8: Union density in 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

***Source**: Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000*

Table 9: Union density in 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, cited from Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000.*

The same holds for Canada and the US (Best 2001). In Canada, 12.6% of 15 to 24 year-olds were unionised in 2000, compared to 34% of older workers (25-54 years). For those aged between 45 and 54, the unionisation rate was 42.1%. In the United States, the unionisation rate among 16 to 24 year-olds was 5.7% in 1999, compared to 11.9% among 25 to 34 year-olds and 19.8% among the 45 to 54 age group.

A second, and rather alarming, development is that the rate of unionisation of youth is declining faster than among other workers. For example in Sweden, Great Britain and the Netherlands, the rates of decline seem to be inversely related to age. In the US, the unionisation rate of the youngest age group declined from 9.1% in 1983 to 5.7% in 1999, while in the 45 to 54 age group unionisation fell from 27% to 19.8% (Best 2001). Only recently has union density among the young in the U.S. begun to catch up slightly.

3.2. Explaining unionisation decline

The decline of trade union membership over the last two decades in the developed world has led to considerable discussion in western labour research on the underlying reasons for this development. The following section will outline two major currents of this debate, the individualisation and differentiation hypothesis, on the one hand, and the employment-centred approach on the other. This debate will be confronted with some recent empirical findings on young people and trade unions.

3.2.1. Differentiation and individualisation approaches

The differentiation and individualisation approach usually refers to an academic body of sociological writing that became popular in the late 1980s. Analysts of a differentiation of the working class have regularly pointed to changes in the employment patterns: in many developed countries white-collar workers (traditionally more difficult to organise) have come to outnumber blue-collar workers. This secular trend is, as shown above (Figure 4), particularly pronounced among young workers. New skills have been created also. As pointed out by Hyman (1997), these trends have had two important consequences: on the one hand they created a "significant category of 'winners' from the processes of technological and organisational change: a new elite probably unresponsive to the appeals of traditional trade unionism; conversely there has been a rapid growth of a 'white-collar proletariat' (often female) whose security and prospects depend on the employer's goodwill. At the other extreme, there has been a substantial growth of precarious and 'atypical' forms of employment, particularly with the decline of manufacturing, and the expansion of an array of private sector services. This peripheral workforce has in most countries proved painfully difficult to organise, if indeed unions have even made the attempt." At the same time, the world outside of work ("world of life", as Habermas named it) is seen as increasingly important for the workers' subjectivity. Interests, attitudes and tastes are becoming diversified to a point where communication among colleagues (and thus solidarity?) may be impossible, claims Zoll (1996).

This links up with theories of an "individualisation" of society (Beck 1986). These theories observe that collective frames of reference "that once served as the basis of individual identity and the foundation of working-class identity are losing in significance and gradually being replaced by multitudes of sources of identification, a belief in the efficacy of the self, more autonomous attitudes towards institutions and a declining preparedness to participate in collective movements" (Allvin and Sverke 2000: 72). In the view of Zoll (1996), central organisational resources for collective action such as identification (with the goals of unions), delegation (seeing the union as an insurance), and loyalty (generally passive membership stance that becomes active in time of conflict) are vanishing. As a consequence, trade unions can no longer count on constituted collectivities or a homogeneity of interest, but must reckon with individuals who ask to be respected in their identity and individuality.[5]

A variant of this argument claims that young workers, in particular, show more pronounced instrumental attitudes towards unions. This view is supported by a survey among members of a Swedish blue-collar union (affiliated to the *LO*) which found that instrumental attitudes (defined as "identification with the union in exchange for benefits associated with membership") are

[5] In reality these developments are, however, as theorists of individualisation have emphasised themselves (Beck 1986; Zoll 1996), much more ambivalent. Old distinctions vanish and new opportunities and issues for collectivity (*Vergemeinschaftung*) arise. Their analysis tends, however, to be biased towards social dissolution and individualism.

particularly common among young members and the well qualified (Allvin and Sverke 2000). The authors interpret this finding as follows: "ideological aspects of trade unionism are attractive to old-timers as well as idealists but not to newcomers, which suggests that solidarity might hardly serve the purpose of uniting the workforce in the differentiated and individualised future" (ibid.: 90). They explain this attitude in terms of the new generation's "critical distance of the self-conscious individual, well aware of their own plans and references" (ibid.: 86). Held (1999) qualified this view by emphasising from his findings among young German workers that individualisation is only one of several possible responses to changes in the labour market (and society as a whole). Some young people were observed to react to the difficult labour market situation by drawing new lines of social boundaries and exclusion.[6]

It is due to these processes of "dissolution" of subjective and objective dimensions of class structure that the aggregation of interests as an essential precondition of any collective action is viewed as becoming increasingly difficult for unions. In the discussion, two basic positions have emerged on the grounds of this stylised argument. In the face of the challenges, a first current tends to abandon the solidaristic underpinnings of unionism by suggesting that unions should move towards a more client-oriented relationship with members (Cave 1994). Questions raised by these proponents concern the quality and extent of individual services offered to individual members and the nature of workplace unionism. As Waddington and Whitston (1997) note, this approach is often associated with unitary views, implying that unions should seek alliances with employers rather than pursue interests contrary to those of employers. In the UK, for example, unions started in the 1980s to integrate an extended range of individual membership services into their recruitment campaigns, including insurance, travel and shopping. While the TUC and its affiliates saw services rather as a complement to traditional collective union functions, Bassett and Cave (1993) have claimed that they should become the central element in an individualised agenda, comprising *inter alia* a new financial relationship based on direct debit and support for individual members to conduct their own contract negotiations.[7]

Another current rather suggests taking up the challenges arising from individualisation and differentiation to re-invent worker solidarity. Zoll (1996: 82) has been arguing strongly for breaking up the "bureaucratic relationship between authorities and a mass of controlled individuals". The implicit paternalism of trade unions makes them still develop policies *for* certain disadvantaged groups (young people, women, unemployed, etc.), rather than acting *with* them, he claims. But "self-confident individualists are much more capable of real participation and the responsibility that this implies" (ibid.: 83). In this view, union organisations need to open up their discourses to members and non-members, allow for more extensive and direct membership participation and abandon the strong need for control felt by union officials (a feature deeply rooted in union culture (ibid.)). In a similar vein, Valkenburg (1996: 104) concedes that it is not obvious that union members are eager to participate; unions have, however, used this argument for too long to justify the organisational status quo and to distract

[6] Nationality was found to be an important criterion of these segmentation tendencies. One of the notable findings of Held's study is that the majority of young union members positioned themselves closer to the political right than the unorganised youth (they also spoke out more frequently against the need to organise international youth encounters or the necessity to give everybody, independently of their origin, the same voice). This might be *inter alia* explained by the finding that the young union members were more concerned about their future prospects and viewed society as 'attacked' rather than 'changing'. The question arises why such youths are attracted by trade unions. Fichter *et al.* (2001) assume that German union discourse is too defensive and in particular does not sufficiently transcend national boundaries in its discourse on solidarity.

[7] For this discussion, see also chapter on the impact of information and communication technologies.

from the fact that the "attitudes of most members only reproduce what the trade unions have accustomed them to". Opening up the organisation to the members' needs will also have consequences for central political instruments such as bargaining agreements. They need to become receptive to individual or group-specific claims, while being integrated in the framework of comprehensive agreements (Zoll 1996).

Approaches operating with the individualisation and differentiation hypothesis have been subject to a number of criticisms, both concerning their policies and analysis. Regarding the latter, Hyman (1999) and Fichter *et al.* (2001) have rejected as "simplistic" the notion that traditional working-class values of collectivism have given way to more individualistic orientations. This argument underlines that the working class had always been differentiated and sectionalism was always perceived as a real threat – otherwise there would have been no need for solidarity. While the development of collectivism and the aggregation of interests through unions has to be understood as a political process to create alliances and commitments (Leisink *et al.* 1996) and less as an automatism resulting from a certain position in the class structure or some diffuse "modernisation" of society, most authors concede, however, that this task has become more difficult in contemporary society, as the spatial location and social organisation of work, residence, consumption and sociability have become highly differentiated.

More fundamental criticism has been articulated by Waddington and Whitston (1997), who have criticised this approach for the absence of any analysis of power. Although he agrees with much of the analysis of the literature on individualisation and differentiation, Hyman (1997; 1999) has therefore, in the face of this shortcoming, called for an extension of the problem definition. Any analysis needs to systematically take into account, first, the fundamental changes in the political and economic environment (intensified competition, unemployment, restructuring, 'deregulation' and employers' resistance whereby bargaining processes are increasingly turned into zero- or negative sum games and micro-level solutions to macro-problems are encouraged); and second the erosion of egalitarian commitments within labour movements (going beyond the criticism of Waddington and Whitston), reflected both in increased differentiation among trade unions and in the eclipse of the communist political model and the exhaustion of the social-democratic. For Hyman, an essential precondition for the revitalisation of trade unions is the creation of a kind of unionism that, quoting Heckscher, "replaces organisational conformity with coordinated diversity" and recognises and respects differentiations of circumstances and interests. In the face of vertically and horizontally differentiated groups of workers (and, one could add, age, gender, sexual identities, etc.) the challenge will be to construct a new union agenda that manages to unite rather than divide. Hyman (1999) insists that building solidarity is only in part a question of the organisational capacity of being alert and receptive to the expectations and aspirations of actual and potential members; more fundamentally it is part of a battle of ideas: "The crisis of traditional trade unionism is reflected not only in the more obvious indicators of loss of strength and efficacy, but also in the exhaustion of the traditional discourse and a failure to respond to new ideological challenges. It is those whose projects are hostile to what unions stand for who have set the agenda of the past decades" (ibid.).

3.2.2. Employment-centred approaches

Employment-centred approaches explain the decline of membership among young people in terms of the conditions of their employment and the inadequacies of union organisation at their workplaces. A 'representation gap' (Le Queux 2000) is the overall result. For example, the previous section on youth employment in the EU showed that young people are concentrated in the private sector, particularly in services, and are more likely to work on an atypical contract.

Also unemployment among young people is higher than among the working population as a whole (Table 5). "Throughout Europe, trade union organisation tends to be weaker in private sector services and, with the exception of the countries in which some variant of the Ghent system operates, among the unemployed … Furthermore, workplaces in private 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 unions are not. It is not surprising therefore, that many young workers report that they are not union members because they have never been asked to join" (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000: 27).[8] Although the limited nature of the data on youth employment worldwide does not allow for similar conclusions, it might be expected that unemployment and the sectoral distribution of youth employment (particularly in countries with a proliferating informal economy) cause similar problems of accessibility.

Additionally, due to their higher levels of qualification than their predecessors, a relatively larger proportion of young people have managed to secure employment in white-collar occupations; hence in areas where unionisation rates historically have been lower than among manual workers. Workers in these occupations may expect a rather different range of support from unions than traditional union members, as presumed by Serrano Pascual and Waddington (2000).

From the standpoint of the individualisation and differentiation hypothesis, the employment-centred approach might be criticised for ignoring changes in young people's subjectivity and, alternatively, for not taking into account political and ideological changes nor changes in the environments in which unions are operating. The approach remains equally silent on organisational matters. Although it might be assumed that it favours policies that conceive the challenge of reaching out to youths merely as a question of extending to yet another target group with the same range of instruments, policies and organisational forms, or that it implies a conception of unionism limited to the workplace, it has to be valued for addressing some of the fundamental questions trade unions at times, it seems, have forgotten to ask young people. The following section will present empirical findings on two of these vital questions. Why do people join unions? And why do they refrain from joining?

3.2.3. Trade unions and the recruitment of young people: Findings from surveys

In a survey of 12 British unions Waddington and Whitston (1997) (Table 10) found that the 'bread and butter' issues scored highest among young workers (up to 20) among the reasons to get unionised.[9] "Support if I had a problem at work" received overwhelming support (it is the prime reason for UK workers in general to join a union), followed by "improved pay and conditions". This is in line with findings by the UK service sector union *UNISON* (Kerr and Waddington 1997).

[8] In the countries where some variant of the 'Ghent system' is established (Belgium, Denmark, Finland and Sweden), trade unions play some role in the administration of unemployment benefits. Keeping membership during unemployment provides particular benefits. For this reason, mass unemployment in these countries did not affect membership levels as happened elsewhere (Hoffmann and Waddington 2001: 38).

[9] Disaggregating the data by gender, Waddington and Whitston (1997: 525) found no decisive differences in the reasons for joining. Where differences existed, they seemed to be a function of employment location rather than sex.

Table 10: Reasons for joining trade unions in the 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: 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. In comparison to older age groups, young people placed more emphasis on industrial benefits, training and professional services. This reflects, as Waddington and Whitston presume, the relatively junior position of many young people. Conversely, the "belief in trade unions" is inversely related to age (7.2% of up to 20s). This finding is consistent with the low score of "newcomers" amongst ideologically dedicated members in the Swedish survey by Allvin and Sverke (2000: 80). Whether this data supports, e.g. in analogy to Allvin and Sverke's (2000) interpretation of Swedish data, the hypothesis of a strong instrumentalism (in the sense of the individualisation approach) among young British union members, is subject to debate. Indeed, the comparative high-scores on "support if I have a problem at work" and "free legal advice" might rather be an expression of the lack of employment stability of young people than an indicator for instrumentality (or both).[10] The fact that young members are the least likely to join in order to "improve conditions and pay" than any other age group, may point in the same direction (Table 10).

The British survey certainly indicates, however, that young union members expect adequate workplace support (79.9% of those under 21). This finding is supported by a survey issued by the French *CGT*. It found that job protection and protection of the unemployed ranked first, "improvement of working conditions" coming second (Le Queux 2000). Although "financial services" score, in comparison to the other age groups, highest among the under-21s (4.4%) in the British survey, it seems as if, notwithstanding their usefulness, they do not appeal greatly to potential young (or older) members.

There is very little consistent evidence suggesting any common opposition in principle to trade unions (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 1997). For example, Kerr and Waddington (1997) found that only 10% of young people were hostile to unions, compared to 37% who were sympathetic. A survey issued by the Canadian *FTQ* that was directed at non-members found that 54% of non-union members between 18 and 24 would prefer to be unionised if they had the choice. This compares to 30% of older non-union members (Le Queux 2000). The French survey also found a higher propensity (2/3) to engage in work-related collective action among the young. They were, however, less likely to join a union or to engage in 'traditional' forms of industrial action (ibid.).

[10] Whether it is justified to interpret this as a straightforward expression of 'collectivism' (Waddington and Whitston 1997; Kerr and Waddington 1997) also remains questionable, however.

On the question of why young people would not join a trade union, the primary reasons found in Danish, British and Australian studies are shown below (Le Queux 2000, 2001; Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000).

- *Lack of knowledge, information and contact*. Evidence from most countries suggests that most young workers are unaware of what unions do and how they function. This holds particularly for the private services where unions are rarely present. Allied with this is a shortage of information on how to change working conditions, including the knowledge of their employment rights and, in particular, how trade unions might change inadequate workplace conditions and what benefits membership might offer. "The 'rationale' of trade unionism is thus lost on many young workers" (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000: 32). These shortcomings are, according to the ICFTU, due to the fact that unions do not sufficiently develop strategies to inform young people about unions; that they lack a pro-active approach in reaching out to young people as well as specific policies, activities and information. Equally, unions are unaware of what potential youth members want and need.
- The *image* of trade unions. Many young workers associate unions with workplaces of high risk of injury, poor health and safety practices (such as mining, the docks and manufacturing), and with strikes. For many youth, unions are inappropriate for the workplace. This industrial image itself carries heavy gender (and age) implications: few young workers see unions as having any role in female-dominated industries and workplaces. It would be too easy, however, to perceive the challenge arising from this image as a mere PR task; as there is a core of truth in this perception (Hyman 1997), it's a policy challenge, too.
- *Small workplaces*. Young workers at small workplaces emphasise the difficulties they would face with their employer if they became union members. This implies the possibility of "the sack", particularly if on some form of insecure contract or having hours cut in casual work. Additionally, young workers mention that it is easier to solve workplace problems by direct communication, rather than through a trade union.
- *Job insecurity and turnover*. Young workers in precarious employment with high rates of labour turnover do not join because they do not think that unions can make a difference or, alternatively, that it would not be worth the effort making use of it – despite the problems regularly cited as dominating their working lives: treatment by the manager, heavy workload, and low pay.[11]. Either they prefer direct communication (see above) or they leave work to find another job.
- *Training and apprenticeship*. In an Australian study (Biddle *et al.* 2000), young workers expressed particular concern on the lack of protection for apprentices and trainees, who were reported to be subject to physical and verbal abuse.

Kerr and Waddington (1997) warn against prematurely generalising results of such surveys and call for taking into account the specific conditions of specific groups of young people. They emphasise the wide range of reasons given by young people for not joining. In international comparison these often appear to be country-specific. In their survey of British public-sector workers they additionally varied according to occupation and industry.

[11] According to the AFL-CIO, young skilled and semi-skilled workers in a factory earn one quarter less than they would have in the 1970s. Manual workers are said to earn 30% less. According to Statistics Canada, in 1994 the earnings of young people aged between 20 and 24 was 20% less than of young people 20 years earlier (Le Queux 2000: 7-8).

3.2.4. Action taken by unions to further youth recruitment in developed countries: examples from Canada and the US

In the US, organising underwent a revival in the second half of the 1990s with the election of a new AFL-CIO leadership. Since then, affiliates have been requested to devote 30% of their budget to organising, compared to less than three percent in the 1980s. The AFL-CIO runs a training programme for people who want to become full-time organisers. In 1999, it trained more than 2000 people to work on organising campaigns, a number increasing more than tenfold since 1990. In order to build unions that are more representative of their non-members, most of these organisers are in their 20s and 30s, mostly female and increasingly from 'minority' backgrounds. In 1999, the AFL-CIO had the largest annual membership growth in more than 20 years (expanding, in particular, in the private sector), with the percentage of unionised workers remaining steady at 13.9%. Despite this success the result could not be repeated in 2000 (Best 2001). The aim is to expand in the growing sectors of the economy, such as private services. Low-wage workers (and thus young people) are particularly targeted. The AFL-CIO's 'union summer' programme particularly reaches out to younger generations. It is a four-week internship to develop skills for organisation drives and campaigns for workers' rights and social justice. For $210 a week and free housing in convents, youth hostels and trailer parks the organisers go into neighbourhoods and workplaces in order to find about problems at work and what they want to change. By now, more than 2,000 interns have graduated from summer school.

The *Canadian Labour Congress* (CLC) developed together with regional labour federations a youth action project called 'Solidarity Works!'. In a three-week seminar on labour law, organising, grievances and arbitrations, the young participants have the opportunity to work with unions and community-based organisations. Moreover, the CLC offers to its members the 'Young Workers in Action' course that aims at building basic leadership skills, public speaking fundamentals and effective communication, as well as labour history and union strategies for becoming involved in issues concerning social justice (Best 2001).

3.2.5. Action taken by unions to encourage participation and membership in developing countries: examples from Benin, India and Ecuador

3.2.5.1. Benin

The Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions in Benin (*Confédération des Syndicats Autonomes*, CSA) has 67 local unions as affiliates and represents a total of 51,000 members. It is one of seven trade union confederations in the country. Its development has been very dynamic since its founding in 1991: the membership has been constantly on the increase: in 1991 21 affiliates provided for 20,000 members, in 1997 CSA had 41,000 members and in 2001 65 affiliates had 51,000 members (Table 7).[12] The share of women in the membership is between 10,000 and 13,000. The confederation's affiliates organise in the public and the private sector as well as in the informal economy. The organisation's youth coincides with the relative youth of its affiliates and to some extent its members.

The CSA fulfils three basic functions for its affiliated trade unions: first, it provides trade union education. Union manuals cover issues such as trade union functions, trade union finances, democracy and founding a union. Additionally, courses or short training sessions on an individual basis are held on these issues. The education programme is, according to Simeon Toundé Dossou, charged with education and the informal economy at CSA, probably the central reason for the CSA's recruitment successes. Secondly, it gives advice to local unions on issues with

[12] Benin is a small country with around 5.6 million inhabitants.

which they are confronted. Thirdly, it seeks to found local unions and stimulate their affiliates to conclude company agreements on issues such as health, career development and wages.

In terms of recruitment, the CSA's innovative approach lies in reaching out not only to the growing private sector and informal economy (going thus beyond the shrinking strongholds amongst public servants caused by structural adjustment programmes), but also to the growing number of workers on fixed-term contracts (2-3 years) in public services. The opening up to new realities in the labour market particularly concerns young workers between 20 and 25, as it is they who are particularly exposed to unstable employment conditions in general or working in the informal economy. This is true regardless of their educational background and qualifications. According to the CSA, the central challenges for the future are, first, to organise and recruit temporary workers and, second, to extend further into the informal economy, as there is believed to be an enormous demand for union representation in this field (currently CSA has 10 local unions in the informal economy). Struggling for the incorporation of these workers into labour law and eventually establishing international regulations is an important part of this challenge.

In terms of its population, Benin is a very young country. In 1996, 55% of its population was under 18 (ILO 2000) and approximately 9.3% of the members are under 25. Young workers are reported to be often unaware of trade unions. Organised labour also struggles with some bureaucratic image or the claim of being corrupt and in the pay of the employers. Most importantly, perhaps, young workers deny the need for any collective organisation of their interests. Hence, acute workplace problems are the most likely way of convincing young people of the need for unions, as explained by Simeon Toundé Dossou, according to whom, taking up negotiations over collective agreements or resolving conflicts at the workplace, as well as questions of social insurance cover and wages are of particular importance to young workers. More general issues of interest to young people that might be taken up by unions are good governance, HIV and democracy.

Although there are no recruitment officers as such (maybe not surprisingly, taking into account that the 35 people working for the confederation are volunteers), the confederation has in the past undertaken recruitment drives in different regions and used television and radio spots to provide information about its role and ambition. The bulk of organising is performed, however, by the local unions. The confederation's role is therefore rather to stimulate the recruitment of, for example, women or young people.

So far, the CSA has not adopted any specific strategy towards young people. Although courses have been held which specifically targeted young workers, this is not a focus of its work. The general perception in the union is that recruiting young people poses no particular problem for the union. This may be explained by the 'youth' of the organisation itself in terms of its organisational history and 'personnel' (most of the people in charge at CSA are younger than 45). The CSA did, however, try to adapt its manuals on workers' action to the range of different employment conditions, e.g. in the informal economy where many young people work, in order to be as inclusive as possible. The establishment of a youth committee is planned.

3.2.5.2. India

The HMS (*Hindh Mazdoor Sabha*) India is a national centre with 16 national industrial federations and 22,000 registered trade unions, covering all industries.[13] The HMS currently has

[13] The HMS is one of 17 national trade union centres. Most of them work for political parties. There are a total of 65,000 registered unions in India where the unionisation rate is around 8-9%.

around 4.6 million members. Young people under 25 account for 1.4% of the membership (Table 7). India's population, like Benin's, is young: in 1996, 41% was under 18 (ILO 2000). The biggest problem for young people is the high unemployment within their ranks: more than 60 million young Indians are unemployed. High levels of professional qualification do not protect against unemployment. The HMS therefore wants the right to work in a job that suits the worker's qualification to be included in the constitution. Bad working conditions, low wages, limited career opportunities and lack of training and access to education contribute to the difficulties faced by young Indians on the labour market.

Since 1999, organising young people has become a priority in HMS. It has changed its internal structures accordingly and, today, a youth representative is invited to the national executive meetings as a permanent member. Until 1995, the HMS youth committee had no funding at all. Therefore, the HMS decided (being financially weak itself) to introduce a system of various low-priced coupons that young workers would buy, the yields from which would then be directed to a special youth fund in the HMS budget. These funds are only to be used for youth-specific policies; a policy that makes the HMS youth committee financially independent of its national centre.

Child labour and education are currently major issues of the youth committee. For example, at a regional three-week fair with several million visitors, HMS set up a an exhibition on child labour and made employers sign a declaration saying that they would not employ any child under 14. Every year, the HMS manages to get 50,000 such declarations signed at such exhibitions. They also provided three hours per day of primary education to 75 children working in railway stations. The HMS youth wing also offers education classes for workers that are new to a particular industry. In groups of 20, they are trained on the history of the industry and its unions and made familiar with the HMS' fundamental ideology of an independent and democratic unionism.

Concerning its policies to reach out to young people, the HMS has developed a strategy that builds on membership activation. Organised workers participate in courses where they learn about organising and the industries. At the end of the course they set up individual future action plans for organising and recruiting. These trained workers, e.g. railwaymen/women, then go to workplaces in their local area, e.g. in the sugar industry or agriculture. During lunchtime or after work they try to involve them into discussions about the situation and problems at work or wages. Alternatively, union organisers go to daily job markets where workers gather in the morning or visit them at to their homes. The objective is to set up a union at the workplace. The organisers will help with the paperwork necessary to get the trade union registered at the labour commissioner's office and set up a list of demands to the employer. Currently, more than 1000 young workers are pursuing the organising and campaigning for the HMS all over India. Its successes include more than 25 registered unions set up and about 40.000 new members recruited over the last two years.

According to Mukesh Galav of the HMS youth committee, the major cause why young workers abstain from membership is that trade unions in India tend to function as instruments of the political parties. Union fees may also put them off, as many workers struggle for their survival, looking for a job on a day-to-day basis. A widespread fear of employers, who are supported by government's hire and fire policies, contributes to workers' hesitation. The fact that most union leaders are between 50 and 70 (and male) might not improve the union's appeal to young workers.

3.2.5.3. Ecuador

Marcela Arellano is head of the works council (*secretaria general del comite de empresa*) at the Ecuadorian textile manufacturing company *Textil Indulana*.[14] The trade union at enterprise level (*comite de base*) is affiliated to the textile workers' federation (around 1000 members, 90% men) that belongs to the national confederation CEOSL. The local union has 84 members, 12 women and 72 men. 20% of the unions' members are aged under 30. The number of members has, however, been falling from 120 over the last years, mainly because of the monthly loss of 2-3 colleagues who emigrate to the US. Without renewed recruitment successes the number of unionists would have decreased to 20. Within the company the works council has improved its standing as it investigated systematically company finances to refute the claim that no profits were made. Although management tries to prevent workers from joining the union, it acted somewhat contradictorily when it provided food in the last national strike.

Central to the recruitment and organising successes was the involvement of the company's young workers (members and non-members) in a range of social activities. An action group of five young unionists regularly organises local football championships with other enterprises, as football is the national sport in Ecuador. The registration fee of this event is used for the local youth fund. Volleyball contests and walks have been organised too. In breaks or at the end of these events the opportunity is taken to inform about the union's role and purpose and the benefits to be reaped from membership. Other young unionists are responsible for the planning of the women's day, the youth day or Labour Day. A central condition for the organising success was the existence of a core group of 5 – 6 union activists who have been working together for the last seven years. Marcela Arellano emphasises, however, that sometimes the older workers (most of them are organised at Textil Indulana) have more success in recruiting than the young.

The local union also made use of union teachers from the national organisation, holding courses on gender, democracy and local unionism. These events have been attended rather more by the young, as the older workers are reluctant to take part in education. Moreover, the local union set up a monthly study circle to discuss issues such democracy or national developments, regularly attended by about 30 young people. The confederation also offers certified professional education courses at reduced fees, e.g. on electricity or computing. The local union feels, however, that within their organisation there is insufficient communication and information

Lack of dedication and (class) consciousness are central obstacles that prevent young people from joining unions. Union committee meetings lasting 2-3 hours with rulebook discussions or extensive analysis are regarded as boring and might deter potential newcomers and young members. At the end of the joint walks, the young workers are reported to "want to change everything and make a revolution". As Marcela Arellano points out, it is therefore necessary to introduce more dynamics into union youth work. Young people have to be given responsibilities for issues they are at ease with – social tasks or, alternatively, human rights and less tasks demanding analysis. After such a gradual introduction to the union they might eventually take over other tasks, too.

[14] Ecuador has 11.7 million inhabitants. In 1997, youth unemployment was around 18.9%. In 1996 43% of the country's population was under 18 (ILO 2000). In recent years, the Ecuadorian textile industry has been marked by increasingly flexible employment relations and sub-contracting. As a result, employment relations in the industry became increasingly informalised and union organising difficult, as subcontractors would answer any organising attempt by dismissing unionists.

The works councillor emphasises that there are no recipes for youth organising. Strategies always have to be adapted to the specific circumstances. She believes that it is important, however, that unions open up to all workers, instead of concentrating on certain (privileged) groups. The key to future union successes is to centre on human dignity. As workers around the world are de-humanised, humanising trade union organisation will be a means to give back dignity back to workers as well as to bring workers closer together.

3.3. Elements of a strategic approach to reaching out to young people

The surveys presented here indicate that trade unions can count on much less ideological dedication among young members than among the older generations. This alienation between youth and unions may point to the dissolution of certain socio-cultural *milieux* as well as the exhaustion of a traditional political discourse. At the same time, it probably reflects the general crisis of legitimacy of institutionalised politics among the young (party politics are particularly affected).[15] This is not to say that young people are uninterested in politics or not receptive to collective action. The anti-globalisation movement or the recent mobilisation against the election success of the French extreme right demonstrate this (half a million mostly young people in Paris on 1 May 2002). While affinity with union discourse, organisational and political practice are apparently becoming less and less important as 'incentives' to engage and join, other incentives gain in importance. Offering financial services packages (discounted insurances for holidays, homes and belongings; credit cards; discounted mortgage schemes; and access to cheaper motoring), e.g. introduced by many UK unions in the 1980 to develop a consumer-based appeal may help to some extent but have proved to be marginal for youth's interest in unions.

A crucial finding from the surveys presented here was that there is a considerable demand for what unions could offer, particularly if it comes to the rather traditional issues of "problems at work" and, to a lesser extent, "pay and bargaining". This is not surprising, considering the type of conditions and problems associated with youth employment. Taking up workplace-related issues and problems of young workers could therefore be the centre of a strategy for young workers.[16]

But unions appeal ill-prepared to meet this challenge. As shown above, they tend either to be non-existent in the workplaces of young people (service sector or private sector in general (like in Benin); small workplaces; informal economy); not to have developed policies and offers for the particular employment situations of young people; or simply not to consider them as an organising target due to their often 'atypical' employment status (temporary, part-time, activity in the informal economy, etc.). Any serious attempt to tackle the unions' youth problem will therefore require the assessment of the employment situation of the young people to be targeted and the adaptation of policies, offers and organisational structures accordingly. Focussing and diversification are of particular importance, as young workers do not represent a homogenous collective, but are found in very different working environments, engendering differing needs and demands.[17] National campaigns directed at 'youth' easily risk missing their target, as the modest

[15] The neoliberal 'programming' of much of the central international and national regulatory institutions to subordinate and replace politics by market 'necessities' may contribute to this.

[16] Many unions have already started the process of 'back to basics' campaigns, highlighting job insecurity, measures to alleviate stress, anti-bullying and victimisation and low-pay-issues. In countries with long traditions of workplace vocational training the role of unions for securing such training for young workers was highlighted and measures introduced to extend it to a larger proportion of young people (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000).

[17] It should not be forgotten that there are a number of other social factors at stake that create difference (which cannot be further examined here): gender, 'race', origin, etc.

membership gains of such campaigns with weak workplace implementation have demonstrated (Heery et al. 2000b).[18] To some extent, unions will also need to develop more individualised offers for those who, due to the nature of their workplace (work location, size, atypical employment contract, level of unionisation), cannot (or do not wish to) be supported in setting up collective forms of interest representation. For these workers, *inter alia* the provision of legal aid and advice has proved a successful recruitment tool in several countries (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000).

To achieve such changes is certainly no easy task, as it implies opening up towards new employment realities which trade unions have found it difficult (and sometimes refused) to address in the past. In this sense, the youth question is not merely a demographic problem (how to get new members to survive as an organisation). Since young people represent much more than the current union membership today's and tomorrow's structure of the labour market, the 'youth problem' poses more fundamentally the question of whether unions are prepared for the future of work and employment. There are no signs that a 'lost generation' may be succeeded by an upsurge in membership without any substantial organisational and political changes. Taking the youth question seriously therefore has important implications for any union organisation as a whole in terms of its approaches, structures and identity. As such it might indeed function as a catalyst for a necessary more general restructuring of unionism.

What about the expectations, aspirations and needs of young people themselves? A part of the discussion around the relationship between young people and trade unions dealt with the question of whether the youth are more instrumental. Whatever the answer to this question, it is clear that the majority of young people are not unsympathetic to the unions' cause. Nonetheless, they articulate demands: less in terms of prefabricated views of the world and political strategies (1); maybe more in terms of professionalism, readiness of response, accessibility or variety of media usage: young people in the developed world grow up in a corporate service culture with extended Internet presence and 24h-hotlines that shape expectations and customs to which unions have to respond. As the young people are used to regularly making consumer choices in deregulated and diversified markets, the unions' 'offers' and 'performance' (the assessment criteria might be differing from one person to another) are observed more critically than in other generations (2); and certainly in terms of being provided with space, competence and offers to meet their specific needs and demands (3).

An essential condition for the latter is that unions have to adapt their structures of participation to young people. As the general literature on the matter agrees, traditional life-long lay activist 'careers', including multiple functions in a variety of time-consuming internal committees are less and less likely to attract active and dynamic young people. While representative structures cannot be abandoned in democratic mass organisations such as trade unions, they have to be complemented by temporary, issue- and project-related forms of participation. The youth's (expert) knowledge on many issues, not least on their own working situation and how to change it, should be developed and systematically made use of for organising and policy-making (in this

[18] This links up with the more general recent debate on union-organising tactics that has pointed to the unsystematic and reactive character of union recruitment as a prime reason for its failure (Mason and Bain 1991). The literature has (often in an excessively technical manner) identified a number of elements for organising 'good practice': campaigns should be targeted and planned; workplaces and specific (groups of) workers shall be identified as organising targets; mobilising issues are to be found; the rank-and-file to be included in the organising, face-to-face recruiting proves more effective, using like-to-like recruiters (in detail: Bronfenbrenner *et al.* 1998; Heery *et. al.* 2000a, b; Hurd 1998).

respect unions may have to learn from modern management concepts). New autonomies seem necessary for this. Paternalist behaviour often found in relatively hierarchical democratic organisations is less likely to be tolerated by young people and might quickly be answered by exiting. Making young people participate will only be successful, however, if the measures to be adopted are not only meant to bind young people to the organisation (e.g. by creating internal 'playgrounds'). As pointed out before, letting young people have an impact on the organisation is crucial for its very future and, moreover, the precondition for any sustainable commitment of young people. Therefore, the development of youth structures, extended representation rights, staff dedicated to servicing young people and in line with the social attributes of the young targeted (particularly gender and 'race'/ethnicity) as well as the financial resources and the political space necessary for this are important. Another important factor is creating awareness of 'youth issues' within the organisation. This includes actively furthering the involvement of young people in union environments and giving them responsibilities.[19]

Many unions have begun to react to the crisis of youth membership with a variety of organisational policies. For example, a number of unions offer reduced subscription rates for young members that might also be linked to part-time and student members (Le Queux 2000). In some countries, unions have introduced union cards particularly designed for young workers, which provide the holder with access to union services, benefits and protections, irrespective of their place of employment. In the event of a change in employment, this card obviates the need for the young worker to join a new union. Such an approach is easier to implement in countries where there are major confederations that occupy significant representation and bargaining positions, e.g. in France, Spain or Italy, than in unions organised along industrial and occupational lines (Serrano Pascual and Waddington 2000). Other unions have begun to extend their presence to schools and universities, taking into account that more and more young workers are simultaneously in education and that these institutions might be a suitable place to inform about unions and gain access to these workers.

Another central issue to be faced by unions if they wish to reach out to young people once more is that of unemployment. As shown above, the risk of becoming unemployed is between two and four times higher than among the older population and youth employment is particularly sensitive to cyclical economic crises. Particularly in the 'young' developing countries, young unemployed represent the mass of people out of work. In Europe, several unions have laid emphasis on their concern with alleviating high youth unemployment. In some countries, local union centres for the unemployed and joint initiatives between trade unions and unemployment action groups have become commonplace (e.g. in France between the youth wing of the *CGT* and *Ac! (Enough!)*). Providing or co-ordinating some form of training might be a future task for unions in their attempt to outreach to young people (c.f. Le Queux 2000).

The question still has to be raised of whether the continuation of the important work currently underway (in many cases the provision of youth-friendly internal structures) and the implementation of further policies will be sufficient to restore attractiveness among young workers, if they are not complemented by a concept of trade unionism that appeals politically to young workers and holds its promise of making solidarity work for the individual. The "seeming failure of 'business' and 'consumer' unionism" recently analysed by prominent British Industrial

[19] Biddle *et al.* (2000) report from their Australian survey that the majority of young respondents from the hospitality, fast food and retail industries who had a union in the workplace were not in touch with it, either because of lack of attention from the local union representative or because they thought that the union was just there for the permanent core workers.

Relations scholars (Heery *et al.* 2000) and the number of spectacular organising successes in the US among the traditionally weakly organised workforce (the *Justice for Janitors* campaigns of the *SEIU*, immigrant construction workers in southern California, clerical workers at American universities) have produced a growing interest in the US 'organising model'. A number of unions in other developed countries (UK, Canada, Australia) have begun to integrate basic ideas of the approach into their repertoire.

It will be interesting to evaluate to what extent and under what conditions the underlying philosophy of a re-activation and re-politicisation of the membership and rebuilding local union democracy by "worker participation, confrontation, pressure from arenas other than the worksite itself, and strategic planning" (Voss and Sherman 2000: 85), *inter alia* implying the (re-) transformation of trade unions into social movements (Frege 2000), might attract young people and thus contribute to a political and organisational revitalisation of trade unions.

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