

Policy Snapshot

Policy-relevant findings from selected EU research projects

Issue 5 | March 2013

EU policy priority Inclusive Growth

Research focus Employment

Featured projects

NEUJOBS, WALQING, WORKABLE, YOUNEX

Research results on:

- The future of the European labour market
- Quality of work and life in low-skilled job sectors
- Youth unemployment and exclusion



Policy Context

Envisioning a job-rich recovery

*Full employment and social cohesion: 'These objectives remain the core concerns of EU citizens and are at the heart of Europe 2020.'*¹



A key aspiration of the Europe 2020 Growth Strategy is to produce 'fresh momentum' for boosting employment. More specifically – as outlined in the flagship initiative 'An Agenda for New Skills and Jobs'² – EU leaders are trying to produce momentum that will:

- **help people gain the right skills for future jobs**
- **create new jobs, and**
- **overhaul EU employment legislation.**

Given the protracted impact of Europe's financial and economic crisis, boosting employment will not be easy. In 2012 the EU jobless rate hit an historically high level of 10.7%. This year and next the unemployment rate is forecast to be even higher, hovering around 11%³.

Considering those projections, the EU's target of getting 75% of the working-age population (20-64 years) in work by 2020⁴ looks rather optimistic.

The 75% employment target seems particularly ambitious in light of past performance: only once during the last two decades (in 2008) has the employment rate in the European Union squeaked above 70%⁵.

While current conditions may not favour a speedy job-rich recovery, European policymakers nonetheless remain committed to addressing the employment challenge. Commenting in February on the European Commission's 2013 Annual Growth Survey, the European Council stressed the need to 'address high and rising unemployment, in particular structural unemployment, and risks of labour market exclusion'.⁶

Acknowledging that 'the duration of the crisis and the rapid restructuring of economies have highlighted weaknesses in labour market regulation', the Council emphasised that 'reforms should focus on making labour markets more inclusive, flexible and dynamic'.

Consistent with the Council's statements, the **Agenda for New Skills and Jobs** includes concrete actions to:

- **step up reforms to improve flexibility and security in the labour market ('flexicurity')**
- **equip people with the right skills for the jobs of today and tomorrow**
- **improve the quality of jobs and ensuring better working conditions, and**
- **improve the conditions for job creation.**

¹ COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION, Towards a job-rich recovery, COM (2012) 173, 18.4.2012

² COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION, An Agenda for new skills and jobs, A European contribution towards full employment COM(2010) 682, 23.11.2010

³ COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT, European Economic Forecast, Winter 2013 http://ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/publications/european_economy/2013/pdf/ee1_en.pdf

⁴ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/pdf/targets_en.pdf

⁵ <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/tgm/table.do?tab=table&language=en&pcode=tsdec420&tableSelection=3&footnotes>

⁶ Council conclusions on the Annual Growth Survey 2013, 3220th ECONOMIC and FINANCIAL AFFAIRS Council meeting, 12.02.2013

The Employment Package

Last April the European Commission brought forward a bundle of job-boosting measures referred to as The Employment Package⁷. Aimed at facilitating 'a job-rich recovery', the three-part Package takes its inspiration from the Europe 2020 growth strategy:

The European Commission's Employment Package 'Towards a job-rich recovery'

1. Support job creation

- by reducing taxes on labour
- by using hiring subsidies effectively
- by exploiting the potential of key sectors, such as green economy, ICT, or health and care sector.

2. Restore the dynamics of labour markets

- by helping workers succeed when changing jobs or getting back into work
- by mobilising all actors to implement the reforms required
- by investing in skills based on better forecasting and monitoring of needs
- by promoting the free movement of workers.

3. Strengthen the governance of employment policies

- by reinforcing their monitoring with the EU countries so that employment and social concerns do not lag behind economic ones.

Research Findings

From selected SSH projects

► NEUJOBS - Employment 2025: How will multiple transitions affect the European labour market?

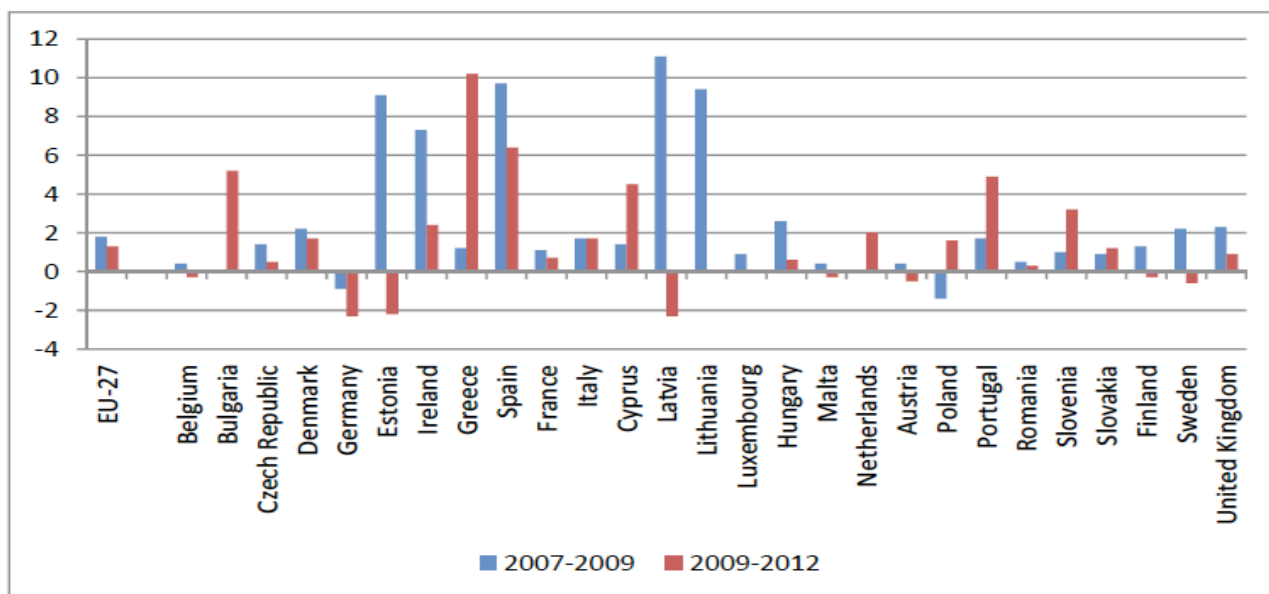
A forward-looking project, NEUJOBS is exploring likely future developments in European labour markets. While final results are not expected before 2015, the project has already issued some interesting preliminary findings. A NEUJOBS policy brief⁸ published in January, for example, draws attention to several disturbing developments. The document observes that 'pressures to move in search of work are leading to losses of better qualified workers from Member States in difficulty, imperilling social cohesion'. Moreover, as the crisis endures, the researchers warn that 'social problems that had appeared to be solved are resurfacing'.

While acknowledging the initial resilience of labour markets in many Member States, the NEUJOBS policy brief points to 'worrying signs' that such resilience is not being sustained and that 'labour market mismatches are becoming more prevalent'. NEUJOBS suggests that such developments 'could signal an erosion of human capital and the re-emergence of some of the problems of employability or adaptability that were central preoccupations of the European Employment Strategy launched in 1997'.

Looking ahead, the policy brief concludes that **'it is becoming increasingly likely that there will be a protracted period of adjustment before any sense of normality is restored'**. The document warns that 'alarming rates of youth unemployment could translate into an enduring loss of human capital. A re-emergence of hysteresis – the decline in employability consequent upon extended detachment of the long-term unemployed from the world of work – is a clear danger.'

⁷ COM (2012) 173, 18.4.2012

⁸ <http://www.neujobs.eu/publications/policy-briefs/what-does-crisis-change>

Figure 1. The change in the unemployment rate in Member States (percentage points over period)

Source: NEUJOBS elaboration from Eurostat data.

In an earlier policy brief⁹, issued in October 2012, the NEUJOBS researchers cautioned that ‘the long-term transitions that were set in motion just a few years ago risk being overtaken by short-term priorities’. That concern is repeated in the project’s January briefing which identifies a ‘focus on job preservation rather than job creation or the stimulation of new activities’.

► WALQING - Work and life quality in new and growing jobs

Evaluating qualitative aspects of new and growing types of jobs in Europe, the WALQING project focused on sectors characterised by low-skilled work, low wages and potentially problematic working and employment conditions. The researchers ended up concentrating on five specific sectors: cleaning, construction, waste disposal, healthcare & social work and work in hotels and restaurants. Drawing on data from 11 countries, the research produced a wealth of insights and good practice examples.

Key findings of the WALQING consortium are summarised in a set of **sector-specific brochures**¹⁰. Available as pdf downloads on the project website, the brochures cover the following:

- The Cleaning Sector: Office Cleaning
- The Construction Sector: ‘Green’ Construction
- The Sewage & Refuse Disposal Sector: Waste Collection
- The Health & Social Work Sector: Elderly Care
- The Hotels & Restaurants Sector: Catering



⁹ <http://www.neujobs.eu/publications/policy-briefs/eu-labour-markets-flux-why-flexibility-alone-not-enough>

¹⁰ <http://www.walqing.eu/index.php?id=90>

Walqing also produced a handy **online tool**¹¹ (web resource) that makes the project's findings accessible not only to policymakers but also to members of the research community and the general public. The tool provides two different interfaces. One is an interactive map allowing users to navigate through country-specific findings. The other – pictured below – is a table featuring good practice examples linked to key issues in the five sectors examined. The table enables users to compare how problematic work-related issues are being addressed in a variety of contexts.

WALQING online tool with hyperlinked good-practice examples on work-related issues

	Cleaning	Elderly care	Catering	Construction	Waste
Markets & customers			The European guide to procurement (EU)		
Vulnerability & inclusion	Service vouchers (BEL)	Reducing racism & discrimination in the care sector (ITA) Legalisation of caregivers (ITA)		Labour inspectorate approved identity cards (NOR)	Social cooperatives (ITA) Family jobs (BUL)
Flexibility	Promoting day-time cleaning (BEL)	Internal temping unit (DK)	Cold line preparation in hospital catering (ESP)		Flexible shift-work options (ITA)
Security & precariousness			Stabilising employment over the year (GER)		Closely associated temporary workers (DK) The "Tin Man": Regularising temporary workers (DK)
Wages & benefits				Child benefit scheme (BUL) Life insurance programme (BUL)	
Autonomy & regimentation		Boosting engagement (UK)		High road to green construction (BEL)	
Skills & careers	Professionalisation and training (NOR)	Reablement scheme (UK) Training for caregivers (ITA)	Mentoring scheme (LIT)	Social partner campaigns (BUL)	Staff database for internal labour market (ITA) Skilled waste workers (DK)
Employee voice	Image campaign (AUT)				Image campaign (BUL)
Health & safety	The use of technology in the Norwegian cleaning sector (NOR)			Social partner H&S campaigns (BUL) The Norwegian safety representative mechanism (NOR) Benefits of 'green' building (BUL)	Innovative machinery (ITA)

► WORKABLE - Making capabilities work

Concentrating on the capabilities of European youth, the WorkAble project looked at ways of helping young people shape their own development to succeed in labour markets. It also

assessed political and institutional strategies for dealing with youth unemployment and educational dropouts.

Investigating developments in nine different countries, the WorkAble research made several key observations regarding education and employment of young people. The project confirmed, for example, that 'in many cases youth unemployment has long-term scarring effects that negatively affects future employability, pay and wellbeing in adult life'¹². A correlation was observed between school failures and 'long-term damaging trajectories'.

The researchers also identified a need to reassess the way certain jobs are valued in European society. The project found that today's labour market policies are focused to a large degree on the supply side, emphasizing individual human capital. However, 'all jobs do not require a higher education, and all jobs do not offer career prospects and challenges', the consortium observed'. Yet these jobs are still needed even in a modern globalized knowledge society, so consequently 'we must create a society that values all needed jobs,' the researchers argue. Among the intriguing questions raised by the project: **'Why should young people have reason to value jobs that are not valued among the rest of the society?'**


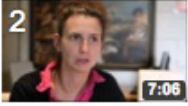




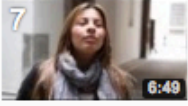


One useful output from the project is **a series of short films**¹³ highlighting educational and/or vocational initiatives from nine European countries (Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Poland, Sweden and Switzerland). The featured initiatives are all designed to support young people on their way from education to work or to apprenticeship. Alongside the perspectives of young people moving from education to work, the films integrate the views of experts from the educational and vocational sector, of local policy makers and of the researchers of the WorkAble project itself.

¹¹ <http://www.walqing.eu/index.php?id=103>

¹² http://www.workable-eu.org/images/stories/publications/6_10_conference%20proceedings.pdf

¹³ <http://www.workable-eu.org/about-workable/pictures>

WorkAble [project videos](#) on YouTube

1		INTRODUCTION: EU research project Introduction: EU research project WorkAble an by Alkje Sommerfeld 114 views
2		Short film WorkAble - Austria Short Film WorkAble - AUSTRIA by Alkje Sommerfeld 62 views
3		Short film WorkAble - Denmark Short Film WorkAble - DENMARK by Alkje Sommerfeld 20 views
4		Short film WorkAble - France Short Film WorkAble - FRANCE by Alkje Sommerfeld 66 views
5		Short film WorkAble - Germany Short Film WorkAble - GERMANY by Alkje Sommerfeld 35 views
6		Short film WorkAble - UK Short Film WorkAble - UK/Scotland by Alkje Sommerfeld 117 views
7		Short film WorkAble - Italy Short Film WorkAble - ITALY by Alkje Sommerfeld 38 views
8		Short film WorkAble - Poland Short Film WorkAble - POLAND by Alkje Sommerfeld 17 views
9		Short film WorkAble - Sweden Short Film WorkAble - SWEDEN by Alkje Sommerfeld 29 views

Links to the short films (some in multiple language versions) are available on the WorkAble project website. The videos can be accessed via YouTube¹⁴.

► YOUNEX - Youth, unemployment, and exclusion in Europe

The social and political exclusion of unemployed youth was the main focus of the YOUNEX project. The researchers looked specifically at the causes of that exclusion and prospects for change.

While acknowledging that progress has been made in recognizing youth unemployment as an important policy issue, YOUNEX found the current approach in the EU to be insufficient. What's needed, the researchers argue, is much closer policy coordination with enhanced input from Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and a stronger emphasis on local solutions¹⁵.

Interestingly, YOUNEX points out that the first EU-level initiatives on youth unemployment were not launched until 2005 ('Youth Pact' being a prominent example.) Prior to that, the researchers suggest, 'youth unemployment was not on the agenda of EU institutions'. They observe that cross-institutional commitment to tackling the problem emerged in response to the start of the European financial crisis in 2008 when youth unemployment began to rise substantially.

The researchers also found that the situation facing unemployed youth varies substantially from country to country. One reason for this, they suggest, is that national and local governments adopt different approaches in dealing with joblessness among young people. The project concluded that better overall results may be achieved in this area through closer coordination of policies across Europe. In order to combat youth unemployment more effectively and mitigate the effects of exclusion, YOUNEX recommends a more collaborative policy approach coupled with an emphasis on local interventions.

Another key recommendation from YOUNEX is that CSOs be integrated more closely in the design and implementation of public policies to address youth unemployment. Asserting that CSOs are dealing effectively with problems in this field, the project advises that they be made essential partners for policy change.

¹⁴ <http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuUG2kOo8RX3BEu-OmPb-Hnk4axX5Sdu->

¹⁵ YOUNEX Project 2nd Policy Brief, October 2011
<http://www.younex.unige.ch/Products/Policybriefs/younex-policy-brief-10-2011.pdf>

SSH research projects highlighted in this snapshot

The following research projects provided key content for this document. All of these projects were developed within the European Commission's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (FP7) under the theme Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities.

Project	Title	Start Date	End Date	Website
NEUJOBS	Employment 2025: How will multiple transitions affect the European labour market	01/02/11	31/01/15	www.neujobs.eu/
WALQING	Work and life quality in new and growing jobs	01/12/09	30/11/12	www.walqing.eu/
WORKABLE	Making capabilities work	02/11/09	30/10/12	www.workable-eu.org/
YOUNEX	Youth, unemployment, and exclusion in Europe	01/05/08	31/08/11	www.younex.unige.ch/index.html

Related FP7 research project

RECOWOE	Reconciling Work and Welfare in Europe	01/10/06	30/09/11	www.recwowe.eu
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About FLASH-IT

FLASH-IT is a European Union dissemination project offering enhanced access to research findings in Socio-economic Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

Part of a broader effort to consolidate knowledge resources within the European Research Area, FLASH-IT aims to help bridge the communications gap between Europe's research and policymaking communities.

Using a custom-built IT interface, FLASH-IT provides consolidated results from EU-funded SSH research projects that are thematically linked to the Europe 2020 priorities of smart growth, sustainable growth, inclusive growth and economic governance.

FLASH-IT focuses on five distinctive yet mutually reinforcing priorities, corresponding to those of the Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and to the societal challenges addressed by Europe's 'Horizon 2020' research programme.



FLASH-IT strives to accommodate the interests of a broad range of stakeholders – public bodies, researchers, corporations and civil society organisations – and is particularly geared toward serving the needs of evidence-based policymaking initiatives.

For more about FLASH-IT, please visit our website:

www.flash-it.eu

This publication was authored by Terry Martin of SPIA UG (haftungsbeschränkt).

info@spia-europa.de

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