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COMPARING YOUTH TRANSITIONS IN EUROPE

JOBLESSNESS, INSECURITY, INSTITUTIONS,
AND INEQUALITY

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1.1. INTRODUCTION

In the immediate aftermath of the Great Recession (2008–2009), European youth joblessness soared, especially in those countries facing the largest financial difficulties. Youth were particularly hard hit in Southern Europe, Ireland, and the Baltic countries. For some countries, this was not a new problem. For decades preceding the crisis, they had struggled with the problem of successfully integrating young people into paid work (Furlong and Carmel 2006).

The Great Recession exacerbated early career insecurity, which had already been evident before the crisis. Unstable, short-term, and poorly paid jobs have resulted from regulatory trends that began in the early 1990s. Employment protection legislation (EPL) was weakened in order to enhance labor market flexibility, enabling firms to respond quickly to changes. This was achieved through the liberalization of temporary contracts and in some cases a reduction of benefit entitlement for young people (Smith et al., this volume; Leschke and Finn, this volume). Measures to render labor markets more flexible have been actively supported by policy recommendations at the European Union (EU) level, with limited concern about the consequences for youth, both before and during the economic crisis (Smith and Villa 2016). The analyses presented in this volume show that focusing solely on youth unemployment is not enough to understand

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the consequences of the Great Recession for young people; we also need to understand how employment insecurity affects youth labor transitions, their long-term impact, and how these are mediated by labor market institutions and policies.

Institutional settings for the integration of youth differ remarkably across Europe, despite attempts made in recent years to overcome national and regional weaknesses following recommendations made at the EU level (Wallace and Bendit 2009; O'Reilly et al. 2015). Countries with more robust and embedded vocational education and training (VET) systems and with integrated employer involvement have traditionally been able to create more stable transition pathways from education to employment (Hadjivassiliou et al., this volume; Grotti, Russell, and O'Reilly, this volume). Those with more fragmented coordination have faced greater challenges and in some cases inertia (Petmesidou and González Menéndez, this volume).

The current evolution of youth labor markets reveals traditional and emerging forms of segmentation along education/class, nationality/ethnicity, and, to some degree, gender dimensions. Some countries are better able to contain labor market segmentation between well-protected prime-age workers and poorly protected younger workers. In others, segmentation has resulted in the involuntary concentration of young workers in temporary and precarious jobs, or it has left them without hope of finding a decent job.

In this chapter, we outline the key problems and challenges associated with analyzing youth joblessness and employment insecurity from a cross-European perspective.¹ First, we briefly contextualize European youth employment trends. Second, we identify how the problem of youth unemployment has been defined in both research and policy frameworks. Third, we outline comparative approaches to evaluating countries' performance. Fourth, we discuss how we conceptualize and compare sustainable youth transitions. Fifth, we consider how inequalities among youth vary by the intersection of gender, parental background, and ethnicity. Finally, we conclude by summarizing the contributions to this volume and suggesting that a more comprehensive approach to policymaking requires understanding both the dynamics of economic production regimes and the effects of inequalities emanating from the family sphere of social reproduction.

1.2. CONTEXTUALIZING EUROPEAN YOUTH EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

Some of the trends in youth employment during the Great Recession could be contextualized in relation to broader global and historical changes to the organization of work resulting from technological change, globalization, and demographic transformation, but these only tell part of the story. These three trends are major drivers affecting aggregate labor demand and supply, in addition to policy

decisions in advanced industrialized countries, but their effects on youth labor markets are not unilinear. The impact of global trends is mediated through labor market institutions, and distinctive patterns of local demand for young workers have their roots in employers' behavior before the Great Recession (Grotti et al., this volume). Although youth unemployment soared after the economic crisis, the causes of this are complex and vary between different categories of youth, as well as between different countries.

From a long-term perspective, the decline of manufacturing jobs in the northern hemisphere has decimated sectors that traditionally supported the integration of large cohorts of young men through apprenticeships. The speed of recent technological change is reshaping work on new digital platforms, but the impact of these changes on employment is neither theoretically nor empirically fully understood (Vivarelli 2014), and the consequences for young people are ambivalent. On the one hand, youth have an advantage over older generations if systems of VET adequately respond to the technological trends and changing job opportunities, where labor market entrants benefit from their up-to-date competencies. On the other hand, as low-skill jobs diminish, young people with few or limited qualifications encounter higher barriers to entering the labor market. Although the digital economy opens up new opportunities for consumers, it raises various challenges for workers, related to the types of jobs it generates and how these are regulated. This includes questions about remuneration, social protection, and, more generally, externalization of risks to workers—for example, in the emerging gig economy, in which young people are increasingly finding employment (Jepsen and Drahekoupil 2017; Lobel 2017; Neufeind et al., 2018). In addition, occupational choice becomes more difficult for young people because job profiles continuously change and investment in a specific vocational training or university study program may quickly become outdated. As a result, certain groups of young people may be “left behind” in the process of accelerated technological change.

Processes of globalization allow companies to relocate more easily and to reap the benefits of low-cost production regions. Although many jobs have been moved to the Far East, in the European context firms do not have to move to very distant shores. Instead, they can often relocate to destinations in Central and Eastern Europe and thereby create employment for young people in Europe's periphery. Nevertheless, unemployment continues to be high in these eastern regions, and it is unclear to what extent offshoring and globalization affect the overall volume of youth labor in Europe. Firms relocate not only due to wage–cost differences but also as a consequence of lower labor standards and more employer-friendly labor law. Relocations or the threat of relocations to regions with low labor standards pose a challenge for national and European policymakers by restricting the policy options available. Nevertheless, despite these global trends, Grotti et al. (this volume) show how young Europeans are more likely to find work in service sector jobs of retail, accommodation and

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food, and health and social work—sectors involving face-to-face delivery that are not as vulnerable to offshoring strategies.

We might expect demographic changes would have a favorable effect on youth employment opportunities because the number of workers per retiree is projected to decline substantially in the EU28 (Eurostat 2015). Projected population trends indicate an uneven distribution of where these are rising or declining across individual EU member states: Half of the EU member states are projected to show rising population trends and the other half declining trends between 2014 and 2080. Population numbers are predicted to rise by more than 30% in 8 of the 28 EU member states, whereas they are predicted to decline by approximately 30% or more in 6 member states (for details, see Eurostat 2015). To meet potential future labor shortages, immigration trends can only partly compensate for declining fertility rates and increasing life expectancy, so it should, in theory, be easier for young people to find work. But as Blanchflower and Freeman (2000) and Gruber and Wise (2010) show, these demographic trends have not resulted in more jobs for youth across the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. What is more likely is that young people will have to work longer and are likely to receive lower pensions in the future.

Although these global trends of accelerated technological change, globalization, and demographic transformation mark a significant change to the world of work, it is not easy to untangle their specific impact on youth employment. The relationship between cause and effect is complex and varied, not only in explaining the differential outcomes between groups of countries but also in explaining the outcomes among different groups of young people in these countries. Rather than viewing “youth unemployment” as a unitary problem, a more refined understanding of what kind of problem this is needs to be specified.

1.3. IDENTIFYING THE PROBLEM OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Endeavors to define the “problem” of youth unemployment have generated a number of contested interpretations as to its causes and possible solutions; these interpretations also affect the way policy is developed to address the problem. Some countries have attributed the rapid increase in youth unemployment to a “deficit model” in their school-to-work (STW) institutions or to the nature of segmented labor markets, in which young people are institutionally marginalized, or they have allotted blame to a “welfare dependency” culture, which may be producing young people without sufficient “grit” or the right set of mental skills to find employment (Pohl and Walther 2007; Wallace and Bendit 2009). The consequences of the economic crisis have prioritized the problem of youth employment and underemployment for policymakers. The solutions developed have included reforms of (pre)vocational training and a modernization

of educational institutions. Countries have pursued various paths of “activation,” either through enabling active labor market policies (ALMPs), such as training measures, or through more coercive steps that include obligatory activation and job take-up with benefit sanctions in the event of noncompliance (Hadjivassiliou et al., this volume). Despite diverse experiences across Europe, the distinction proposed by Scarpetta, Sonnet, and Manfredi (2010) between “poorly integrated new entrants” and young people who are “left behind” offers a very succinct means to identify the key universal trends and policy issues examined in this book.

Poorly integrated new entrants are young people who, although qualified, experience persistent difficulties in accessing stable employment. They are caught in a series of short-term, insecure, and poorly paid jobs that frequently do not correspond well to their qualifications (McGuinness, Bergin, and Whelan, this volume); such insecure employment is often interspersed by intermittent periods of unemployment and/or inactivity. This group of poorly integrated new entrants accounted for approximately 20%–30% of all youth aged 15–29 years in OECD countries in 2005–2007; these youth are particularly prevalent in France, Greece, Spain, and Italy (Scarpetta et al. 2010).

The second group of *youth left behind* is made up of young people who are characterized by inability, discouragement, or unwillingness to enter the labor market; who face multiple disadvantages; and who are more likely to have no qualifications, to come from an immigrant/minority background, and/or to live in disadvantaged/rural/remote areas (Eurofound 2012; TUC 2012; Roberts and MacDonald 2013). The size of this group can be estimated by the number of young people not in employment, education, or training, known as “NEETs.” Although the concept of NEETs has been highly contested for covering a very diverse group of young people—including unqualified early school-leavers, qualified graduates taking time off to find work, and youth with family caring responsibilities—it has become a widely recognized international benchmark for measuring country performance (Mascherini, this volume).

According to Eurostat data, the share of NEETs among the 15- to 29-year-old age group in the EU28 was 13.2% in 2007; it reached its peak at 15.9% in 2013 and then fell slightly to 14.8% by 2015 (for 2015, see Figure 1.1).² Country variations in the share of NEETs in the EU28 range from less than 8% (DK, LU, SE, and NL) to more than 25%. The highest NEET rate is found in Italy—25.7% in 2015; Greece, Bulgaria, and Romania all have NEET rates greater than 20%. The NEET rate for Turkey is as high as 27.9%.

In addition to national NEET rates, Figure 1.1 also presents youth unemployment rates and youth unemployment ratios. These three indicators are to be viewed as complementary in that they measure different phenomena.

The *unemployment rate* is the proportion of youth actively searching for a job as a percentage of all those in the same age group who are either employed or unemployed; students are excluded from this measure. The *unemployment ratio*

Percent

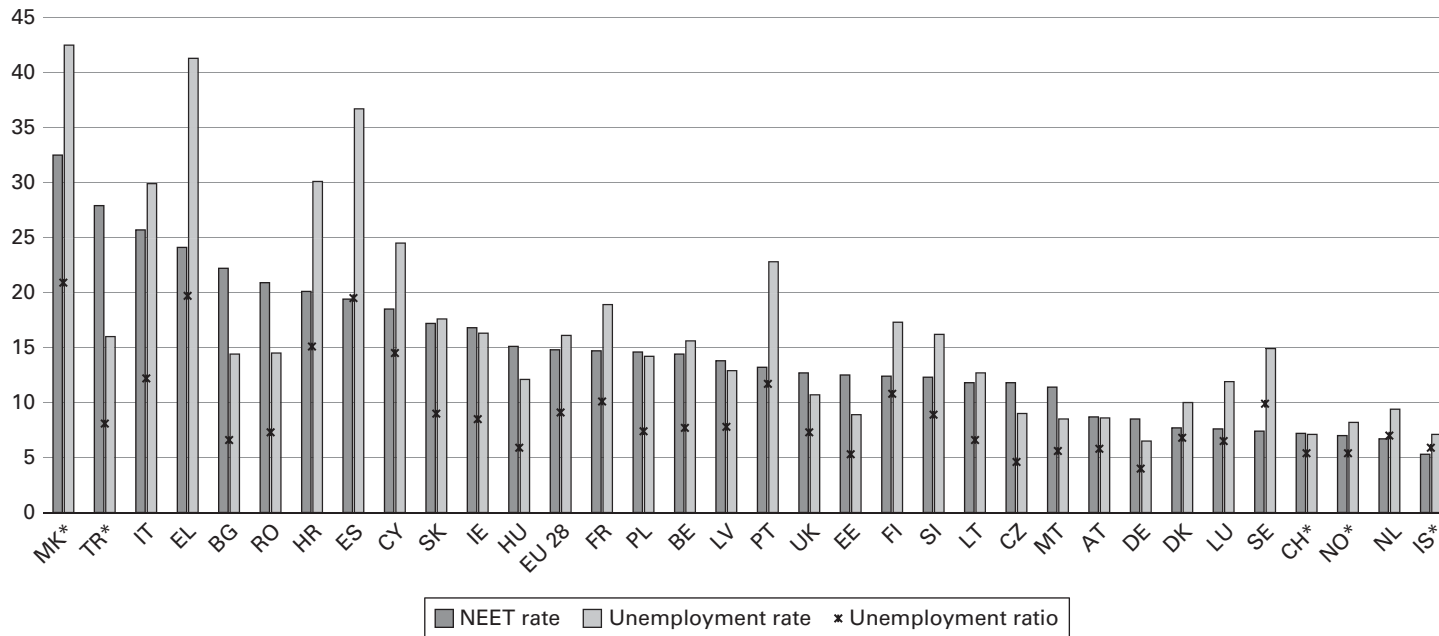


Figure 1.1 Youth unemployment rates, unemployment ratios, and NEET rates in 2015 (young people aged 15–29 years).

Source: Eurostat EU-LFS.

includes students as part of the total population against which youth unemployment is calculated. Because they are measured against a wider population, unemployment ratios are lower than unemployment rates. Ratios provide an indicator of the proportion of youth searching for a job vis-à-vis the relative share of youth in education. The *NEET rate* is the percentage of the youth population not in education or training among all young people in the same age group, including those who are working or studying or both; it can be interpreted as a measure that reflects the fragility of STW transitions in a particular country.

These three indicators vary significantly between countries (see Figure 1.1). Countries with similar NEET rates can have very different levels of youth unemployment rates or ratios. For example, if we compare Sweden, Portugal, and the United Kingdom—three seemingly different countries—we find some interesting points of comparison. The youth unemployment rate in Portugal is very high at greater than 20%. However, Portugal's youth unemployment ratio is fairly similar to that of Sweden at approximately 10%–12%, and these are both higher than the ratio of approximately 7% in the United Kingdom. This tells us that there are relatively more students in the United Kingdom than in Sweden or Portugal compared to those who are unemployed. But the NEET rates in the United Kingdom and Portugal are fairly similar at approximately 13%, which tells us that transitions to work or education and training are more effective in Sweden than in the former two countries. It is the careful interpretation of these data and the interrelationships between them that shape priorities on policy agendas.

Debates about which indicators should be used are both political and academic in nature. They are academic in terms of how we should appropriately measure and interpret the phenomena of youth unemployment and underemployment, and they are political in terms of emphasizing their significance and the importance of different policies developed to address the particular problem that is measured. These indicators also reflect the varying performance of countries, the overall macroeconomic and labor market conditions, and the effectiveness of institutional settings—particularly labor regulation—in facilitating young people's transitions to sustainable employment.

1.4. COMPARING COUNTRY PERFORMANCE

A comprehensive comparison of developments in youth labor market transitions across Europe presents a number of challenges. Early comparative work either tended to focus on a small selection of countries (Marsden and Ryan 1986) or emphasized the distinctive profile of particular types of countries associated with coordinated market economies (e.g., Germany) in contrast with liberal market economies (e.g., the United Kingdom). The *varieties of capitalism* approach

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emphasized the more successful integration and higher skill trajectories of youth in more coordinated economies (Hall and Soskice 2001). The key dimension of comparison was the relationship between business organizations, VET systems, and policymakers—the institutions that comprise the economic sphere of production (O'Reilly, Smith, and Villa 2017).

Variation across countries as regards occupational, company-specific skills, or generalist skill regimes also has very different effects on the speed, type, and quality of transitions that young people make (Russell, Helen, and Philip J. O'Connell 2001; Brzinsky-Fay 2007). In their comprehensive volume on transitions from education to work in Europe, Gangl, Müller, and Raffé (2003) find that countries in which youth have higher levels of education, and those with large-scale systems of vocational training, provide young people with a better start in their working lives. Van der Velden and Wolbers (2003) take a broader view of the impact of institutional conditions on transition outcomes. These authors test for the effects of various institutional indicators, including measures for the structure of training systems, the structure of collective bargaining and wage-setting mechanisms, and the stringency of employment protection. In this direct comparison between competing institutional hypotheses, the structure of training systems again turns out to be the most important predictor of cross-national differences in transition patterns. Boeri and Jimeno (2015), in a study on the divergence of unemployment in Europe, stress that youth unemployment is a main driver of these cross-country differences. According to their findings, the divergence is largely caused by differences in labor market institutions (including collective bargaining, wage-setting mechanisms, EPL, and labor market regulation) and their interactions with demand shocks, including fiscal consolidation.

One way to approach large, cross-national comparisons has been the use of welfare regime typologies with a number of aggregate indicators and dimensions to distinguish between different families of countries with related practices (for a critical summary of these approaches, see O'Reilly 2006; Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser 2011; Arts and Gelissen 2012). Ferragina and Seeleib-Kaiser argue that the main point of contention in these debates is that typologies are usually based on ideal types, not on real types. Two further critiques of regime approaches are that (1) they assume an overarching rationale rather than focusing on specific and sometimes contradictory policy logics and structures (Keck and Saraceno 2013) and (2) typologies tend toward a more static picture of regime types that overestimates path dependency (Hadjivassiliou et al., this volume). Despite these limitations, typologies are often used as pragmatic heuristic devices that allow us to make summary comparisons of a large number of countries. More recently established approaches have been adapted to specifically address the issue of youth transitions (Wallace and Bendit 2009).

Walther and Pohl (2005) put forward a typology of youth transition regimes building on established welfare regime typologies. They include dimensions that

go beyond social protection measures and consider, in particular, education and training, the regulation of labor markets, the role of occupational profiles, and job mobility in structuring labor market entry, as well as mechanisms of “doing gender” (Pohl and Walther 2007, 545–46). They distinguish between five youth transition regimes: universalistic (DK, FI, and SE); employment-centered, which is primarily based on dual training (AT and DE), both school-based (FR) and mixed (NL); liberal (IE and UK); subprotective (EL, ES, IT, and PT); and post-socialist (BG, PL, RO, SK, and SI) (Pohl and Walther 2007).

This regime typology provides a useful analytical framework that is specifically focused on youth transitions. However, as a number of contributors in this volume show, youth transition regimes are in flux because of the impact of the Great Recession; policy reforms have created new forms of regime hybridization as countries attempt to adjust to these shocks (Hadjivassiliou et al., this volume; Petmesidou and González Menéndez, this volume).

The impact of the Great Recession on country performance is well illustrated using the most common measure—youth unemployment rates (Figure 1.2). Although most countries have started to show decreases in youth unemployment since it peaked in approximately 2013, youth unemployment rates were on average still 4 percentage points (pp) higher in 2015 for 15- to 29-year-olds than before the crisis. Whereas the difference between countries recording the lowest and those recording the highest youth unemployment rates (for 15- to 29-year-olds) was 14.1 pp in 2008, the difference was 34.8 pp in 2015 (see Figure 1.2). Some countries are beginning to improve their performance since the economic crisis, including some countries in Eastern Europe, the Baltic States, and the United Kingdom and Ireland; however, for Southern European countries, the situation has deteriorated even further.

Despite the diversity of labor market conditions and the youth unemployment rate across Europe, there is a universally shared experience of growing early career insecurity associated with youth labor transitions. Drawing on a range of different methodological approaches and data sources, the chapters in this volume present evidence on youth transitions and policy interventions for a range of countries within these various regime “types.” The chapters are not exclusively inspired by STW transition regimes; rather, they also frequently cite more general welfare regime typologies in order to capture a broader perspective that goes beyond immediate STW transitions and also covers the effects of early career insecurity.

1.5. CONCEPTUALIZING AND COMPARING SUSTAINABLE YOUTH TRANSITIONS

The concept of sustainable youth transitions can be traced back to the notion of transitional labor markets developed by Schmid (2008). His work has a broader

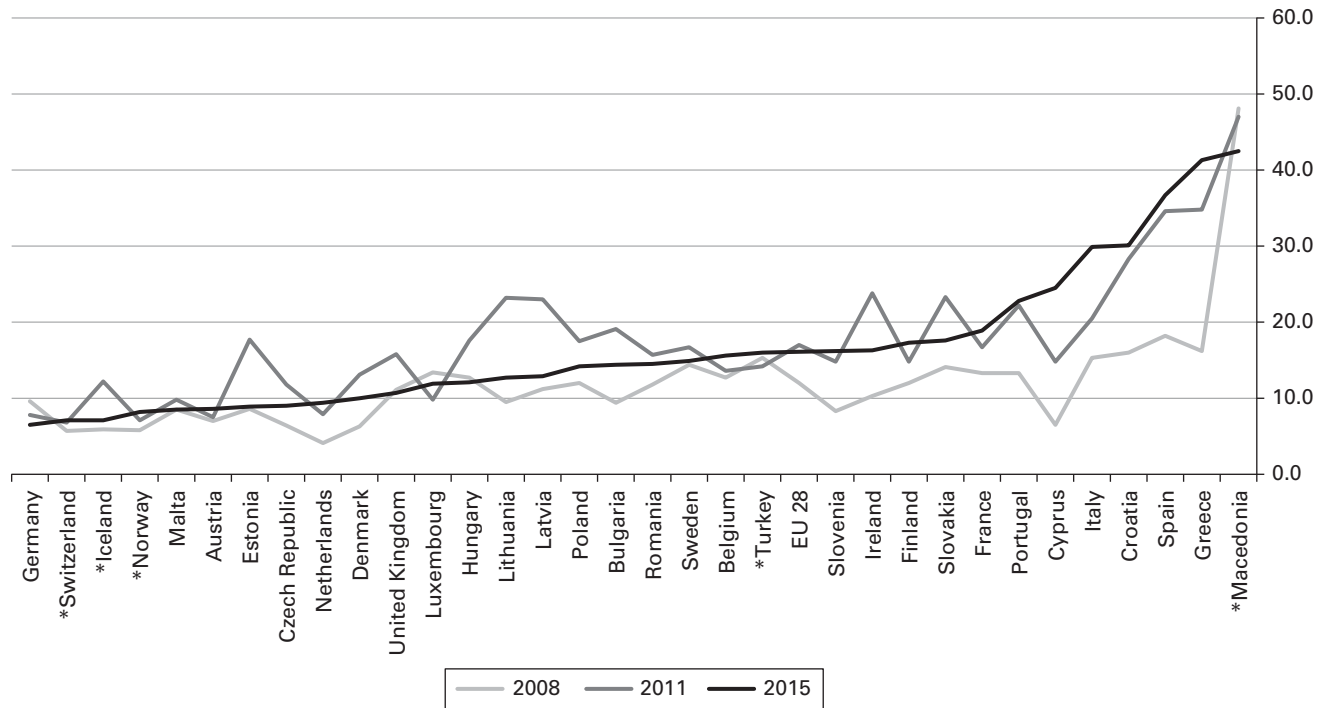


Figure 1.2 Evolution of youth unemployment rates (% total labor force, aged 15–29 years): 2008, 2011, and 2015.
 Source: Eurostat EU-LFS.

focus than this volume in examining transitions ranging from early entry to parenthood and later-life transitions out of the labor market. A key preoccupation of this approach with a view to social risk management is to identify policies and institutions that enable integrative and maintenance transitions (which enable people to stay in employment by moving between different forms of flexible employment) in contrast to exclusionary transitions (which result in unemployment or inactivity) (O'Reilly 2003). In particular, it considers the interfaces of education and the labor market, the labor market and private life, and transitions between different employment statuses within the labor market. In identifying innovative policies that focus on supporting employment continuity rather than job security—by securing transitions over the life course and thereby managing social risks—Schmid's perspective is a precursor to more recent debates on sustainable employment and the flexicurity approach (see Smith et al., this volume; Leschke and Finn, this volume; Petmesidou and González Menéndez, this volume; Berloff et al., this volume).

As the conceptual focus on measuring transitions has become more pertinent, it has been facilitated by the availability of large-scale, cross-national, and, in some cases, longitudinal data sets. Labor market research has increasingly moved from comparing stocks of employed and unemployed people toward an analysis of flows between a large set of different labor market statuses and life states. There has been a rising level of sophistication in terms of data and methods in how transitions have been examined (Brzinsky-Fay 2007; Flek, Hála, and Mysíková, this volume; Berloff et al., this volume). These have ranged from simple year-on-year comparisons of transitions from one state to another using cross-sectional data to more complex longitudinal analysis that follows individuals over a longer time period (Zuccotti and O'Reilly, this volume).

As well as tracing these patterns, attention has also been given to qualitative distinctions between integrative, maintenance, and exclusionary transitions around employment (O'Reilly, Cebrián, and Lallement 2000; Schmid 2008; Leschke 2009). The use of sequence analysis to measure youth transitions has enabled distinctions between countries in which speedy or delayed transitions are more common (Brzinsky-Fay 2007; Quintini and Manfredi 2009; Berloff et al., this volume; Filandri, Nazio, and O'Reilly, this volume). This type of analysis can identify universal trends as well as dominant patterns within particular countries.

Alongside the growing sophistication of the measures used to capture youth transitions, there is also some debate concerning the age limits to youth. The chapters in this volume use a variety of age ranges, depending on the focus of their research question. The decision to go beyond an upper age limit of 24 years that is often used arbitrarily or by statistical convention provides a more comprehensive picture of the longer term consequences of early career insecurity for youth trajectories. Using a broader age band is particularly relevant given the increasingly extended duration of participation in education and the raising of

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the school-leaving age. Furthermore, it allows us to take into consideration not only STW but also labor market transitions and the quality of employment in the early phase of youth working life. Early career insecurity can also have effects on young people in their early thirties—and not only in Southern Europe (Flek et al., this volume; Berloffia et al., this volume). Depending on the analytical aim of the respective chapters and the underlying data used, contributors here take into account youth up to the age of 34 years. Some of the chapters also stress the relevance of disaggregating youth either by age group (Hadjivassiliou et al., this volume; Leschke and Finn, this volume) or by the phase in their working life (Berloffia et al., this volume).

The volume's emphasis on transitions also highlights the importance of developing a dynamic analysis of labor market trajectories that goes beyond conventional analysis of stocks of labor. Several authors propose innovative solutions to overcome static approaches and commonly used indicators such as temporary jobs. These approaches include an analysis of longitudinal data and labor market flows (Flek et al., this volume) and a composite analysis of multidimensional features of job insecurity (Berloffia et al., this volume) or job quality (Russell, Leschke, and Smith 2015; Filandri et al., this volume).

Comparisons of youth trajectories presented in the volume include dimensions of occupational class, education, gender, age, and parental background. A novel additional dimension is the comparisons of youth trajectories that take account of ethnicity, nationality, and migration status, as well as more established cleavages and patterns of segmentation.

1.6. ESTABLISHED AND EMERGING FORMS OF SEGMENTATION AND INTERSECTING INEQUALITIES

Youth labor markets are a particularly apposite space for identifying both established and emerging forms of labor market segmentation. We are able not only to compare contemporary divisions between young people's labor market trajectories but also to trace the longer term legacies related to their parents' labor market experiences by drawing on extensive comparable cross-national data sources to identify patterns of commonality and difference in intersecting inequalities (Berloffia, Matteazzi, and Villa, this volume; Zuccotti and O'Reilly, this volume). In terms of gender differences, young women had higher levels of educational attainment than men before the Great Recession, but they also had slightly higher rates of unemployment. By 2015, young men (aged 15–29 years) had marginally overtaken young women's unemployment rates on the EU28 average (16.5 vs. 15.7, respectively), with 17 countries having more favorable outcomes for women than for men. During the Great Recession, unemployment rates increased for both young men and young women; however, the trend was steeper for men in male-dominated sectors, particularly in construction

and manufacturing (Eurostat 2017; Grotti et al., this volume). In 2015, young women (aged 15–29 years) were still more likely than young men to be NEET (16.7% compared to 13.0%, respectively) for EU28 (Eurostat 2017; Mascherini, this volume). Gender differences have decreased during the economic crisis not because of increasing gender equality but, rather, because of the rising shares of male NEETs.

Youth unemployment is also disproportionately higher, employment rates are lower, and working conditions are poorer for those from certain Black and minority ethnic backgrounds, as well as for some migrant workers (Akgüç and Beblavý, this volume; Spreckelsen, Leschke, and Seeleib-Kaiser, this volume). Some authors conflate ethnic differences as being largely attributable to migration, whereas others recognize that there is a long-standing community of non-White nationals within their societies that experiences very different employment trajectories depending on their ethnicity (Crul, Schneider, and Lelie 2012; Zuccotti and O'Reilly, this volume). Individuals with low levels of educational attainment or with disabilities also have more difficulty entering and remaining in employment in all countries (on educational attainment, see Gangl 2003; on disabilities and vulnerability, see Halvorsen et al. 2017; see also Hart et al. 2015).

One of the underlying reasons for poorer labor market integration of some ethnic and migrant youth and—more generally—of youth from low-income families is that they are less likely to participate in further formal education than their peers, although some ethnic groups have a higher propensity to pursue higher education (Zuccotti and O'Reilly, this volume). Gendered and ethnic segmentation in the take-up of particular vocational pathways can perpetuate these inequalities, with transitions taking place into less valued and less rewarded occupations, while those not participating in VET systems become labor market outsiders (Charles et al. 2001; Becker 2003; Alba 2011; Gundert and Mayer 2012; Gökşen et al. 2016). The specific institutional and societal context—in interplay with effectively implemented policies to address intersecting inequalities—affects the quality of youth transitions (Krizsan, Skjeie, and Squires 2012; Gökşen et al. 2016).

The research presented in this volume shows that we cannot assume that disadvantage in the labor market can be simply read off from a series of particular socioeconomic characteristics of an individual. The experiences of unemployment and labor market transitions vary by the intersection of gender and parental background (Filandri et al. this volume; Berloff, Matteazzi, and Villa, this volume; Mazzotta and Parisi, this volume; Medgyesi and Nagy, this volume). This analysis constitutes the components of the sphere of social reproduction of labor (O'Reilly et al. 2017). It is in this realm that family differences, as well as those of ethnicity, migration status, and educational attainment, influence and interact with the inequality in youth transitions observed in the sphere of economic production (Spreckelsen et al., this

volume; Mascherini, this volume; Zuccotti and O'Reilly, this volume; Ortlieb, Sheehan, and Masso, this volume). The effect of these disadvantages depends on institutional arrangements supporting equality of integration (Gökşen et al. 2016; Hadjivassiliou et al. 2016). Policies can be targeted at institutions of economic production such as VET systems, EPL, and employers; they can focus on the sphere of social reproduction by seeking to improve individual young people's "employability" skills and attitudes and by addressing disadvantaged families (or not); or they can have a more integrated focus on the two domains (O'Reilly et al. 2017).

The youth transitions examined in this book look at different groups of young people, the way they feel about their options (including their attitudes toward and values about work), and how policy communities can enable them to overcome the negative consequences of disengagement. Collectively, the research presented here illustrates the importance of policy initiatives directed at labor market institutions, such as VET systems, EPL, and unemployment benefits, as well as focusing on employers' patterns of recruitment and the role of trade unions.

This research also goes beyond conventional perspectives focused solely on the sphere of economic production by drawing attention to the very significant role of the family in shaping young people's futures and the social reproduction of labor (O'Reilly et al. 2017) and also to the more recent evidence on youth migration trajectories as a distinctive characteristic of the recent phase of youth unemployment in Europe (O'Reilly et al. 2015). Moving beyond STW transitions, this broader approach includes an analysis of the longer term consequences of insecure employment and how these consequences are shaped by institutions. We also distinguish between different categories of youth, which allows us to identify both universal trends and country-specific differences that affect transition trajectories. As a result, these findings provide a more nuanced and informed approach with regard to effective policymaking in different countries.

1.7. ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into four parts. Part I examines problematic youth transitions into employment and recent trends as to where young people find work, how well countries perform, and how this affects policy responses. In Part II, we examine how the family shapes youth labor market transitions. The chapters in Part II use different methodological approaches to address two key transitions for youth: finding work and leaving home. Part III examines youth migration transitions across Europe. Using quantitative and qualitative approaches, the chapters in Part III focus on the situation of young EU migrant workers abroad, when they return home, and the role of labor market intermediaries in

shaping these transitions. Part IV identifies some of the key policy challenges emerging from our analysis. Chapters in Part IV critically assess the concept of NEETs and vulnerable transitions for disadvantaged men and women from ethnic backgrounds, the challenges posed by overeducation, new forms of self-employment, the values and attitudes of young people, and their propensity to engage with trade unions. Drawing on this extensive evidence, we argue that the increasing levels of precariousness, mobility, and inequality in youth labor markets require a comprehensive raft of policies targeted at the spheres of economic production and social reproduction to engage employers more effectively and address inequalities stemming from the family.

1.7.1. Part I: Comparing Problematic Youth Transitions to Work

In Part I, we examine problematic youth transitions into employment. This opens with Chapter 2 by Grotti, Russell, and O'Reilly, which examines the sectors in which young people (aged 16–24 years) are most frequently employed before and after the Great Recession. Drawing on data from the European Union Labor Force Survey (EU-LFS) for 23 countries between 2007 and 2014, the authors find that youth employment continues to be unevenly distributed across sectors and that regardless of the different proportions emerging, many countries share striking similarities in this distribution. The authors ask whether the decline in jobs for youth is attributable to shrinkage in these sectors related to long-term trends in the overall structure of the economy or to the effects of the Great Recession (i.e., a hiring freeze, as in previous recessions, and the dissolution of temporary contracts, which are mainly held by young workers). Using a shift-share analysis, they identify the sectors in which young people have been most vulnerable to job losses so as to assess whether or not jobs for youth have deteriorated by examining *where* the changing employment status of these jobs has seen a decline in full-time permanent opportunities and a growth in part-time and/or temporary work. The evidence is sobering: Job opportunities in “youth-friendly” sectors have declined during the recession, and the quality of this employment has deteriorated.

Adopting a comparative perspective to assess STW transition regimes, Chapter 3 by Hadjivassiliou et al. asks how well countries have performed during the Great Recession and whether lessons can be learned from these experiences. Drawing on Pohl and Walther's (2007) comparative framework of STW transition regimes, the authors assess the youth labor market performance of eight countries (SE, DE, FR, NL, ES, TR, EE, and PL) belonging to five different institutional clusters and the effect of recent policy innovations. They analyze the cross-cluster variation by key institutional dimensions: youth employment policy governance structure (e.g., level/mode of policy coordination and social partners' role); the structure of education and training systems (e.g., VET and

apprenticeships) and the nature of linkages with the labor market; and dominant labor market and welfare policy models (e.g., EPL, wage-formation systems, ALMPs, and the structure of social assistance and benefits systems). Their findings indicate that the institutional configurations of STW regimes in Europe are currently experiencing a degree of flux and hybridization. Evidence of convergence in policy instruments emerges, although differential performance persists. A combination of institutional and macroeconomic factors, together with a common trend of progressive deterioration in the quality of youth transitions across the board, are likely to present significant obstacles for the future.

Providing a critique of recent labor market policies and institutional outcomes in Europe, Chapter 4 by Smith et al. identifies challenges to attempts to engage in a coherent reconceptualization of European employment policy from a youth perspective. First, they argue that there has been an over-reliance on supply side policies to address labor market challenges. Second, the external pressures of macroeconomic stability (including fiscal consolidation), rather than a coherent strategy toward sustainable labor market outcomes, have driven labor market reforms. Third, reform has been based on a downward pressure on job security (i.e., EPL) and a strengthening of employability security through ALMPs, despite slack labor demand. Fourth, because of over-reliance on quantitative targets, there is a lack of consideration of the impact of precariousness and early career insecurity on young people. Finally, reforms have failed to integrate a gender and life course perspective to reflect the realities of labor market participation. In terms of policy implications, the authors call for a renewed perspective on what constitutes an “efficient” labor market, alongside the integration of quality outcomes. They seek to identify policies that could develop durable and resilient labor markets for postcrisis Europe, particularly for the generation entering work.

Using a dynamic version of the flexicurity matrix, Chapter 5 by Leschke and Finn analyzes trade-offs and vicious and virtuous relationships between external and internal numerical flexibility and income security for youth (aged 15–24 and 25–29 years). In all European countries, youth are more likely to be unemployed than adults; they also have a higher likelihood of being in temporary employment. Moreover, young people have more difficulty fulfilling eligibility criteria for unemployment benefits, including minimum contributory periods and means testing in secondary benefit schemes. Drawing on EU-LFS data for 2007, 2009, and 2013, Leschke and Finn estimate the access of young people to unemployment benefits and also their participation in short-time working schemes. This analysis is complemented by an institutional analysis to chart recent changes in unemployment benefit criteria that are directly or indirectly targeted at youth. The results show that after initial improvements geared toward making unemployment benefit systems more encompassing, benefit coverage among youth has once again decreased in a number of countries in the wake of the crisis, highlighting the deficits in protection of young people against economic shocks.

To address these concerns, Petmesidou and González Menéndez in Chapter 6 disentangle and critically examine the complex routes of policy learning and policy transfer within and between different regimes of youth employment transitions. Their stringent analysis provides practical insights differentiating between successful innovations at different regional, national, and European levels. They comparatively examine the possibilities of, and barriers to, policy transfer and innovation between different STW transition regimes in Europe. Examining the policymaking machinery, they ask whether or not this facilitates experimentation with new, proactive youth employment measures. Their analysis shows that factors related to policy development and operational delivery (e.g., the role of evidence, the ability of decision-makers to tolerate risks, and the role of specific actors in forging learning and transfer) are crucial in enabling or hindering effective policy innovation. They conclude by calling attention to the usefulness of cross-national analysis for understanding the interplay between institutional and process factors that drive or hinder knowledge transfer and policy innovation for building resilient bridges to the labor market for young people.

1.7.2. Part II: Transitions Around Work and the Family

A particularly innovative contribution of this volume is its inclusion of an analysis of the sphere of social reproduction related to the role of the family in shaping youth labor market transitions. In Part II, we bring together a number of contributors who use diverse methodological approaches to focus on patterns of flows as well as on the quality of employment into which young people can move. A key element shared by these contributions is to provide innovative approaches to examining transitions and to situate these in relation to family circumstances. For some young people, unemployment is a frictional experience; for others, long-term vulnerability is part of a generational family legacy. The chapters deploy different methodological approaches to address key transitions for youth in finding work and leaving home.

Examining flows between labor market statuses, Chapter 7 by Flek, Hála, and Mysíková compares youth (aged 15–34 years) and prime-age individuals (aged 35–56 years) over various stages of the Great Recession (2008–2012). They examine youth labor market dynamics in four countries (Austria, France, Poland, and Spain) that are illustrative of very different institutional settings and macroeconomic shocks. A particularly novel aspect of this study is the decomposition into “inflows” into and “outflows” out of unemployment for youth and prime-age individuals. The main result is that young workers are more likely to move between employment and unemployment—in both directions—compared to prime-age workers. This is instructive for assessing the gap in the labor market prospects of the two age groups. In summary, the authors find that young people “churn” through the (secondary) labor market relatively more frequently than their prime-age counterparts. These patterns are consistent across countries with substantially different labor market performances, institutions, and EU

membership history, although the length of time it takes unemployed youth to find work varies from country to country. Higher levels of schooling and work experience are key factors influencing the probability of exiting unemployment and moving into employment.

Using a dynamic approach to evaluate youth labor market performance, Chapter 8 by Berloffia et al. illustrates an innovative methodology for grouping employment status sequences and also proposes a new definition of employment quality based on four dimensions: employment security, income security, economic success, and a positive match between education and occupation. The authors use longitudinal data (2006–2012) for 17 countries from the European Union Survey of Income and Living Conditions (EU-SILC) to examine youth (aged 16–34 years) employment outcomes in two different phases of their working life: labor market entry and approximately 5 years after exiting education. They analyze how the quality of employment obtained and the trajectory followed vary according to gender, education, country groups, and time periods (i.e., before and during the Great Recession). Their findings suggest that there is still a pressing need to enhance women's chances to remain continuously in employment and to enable them to move up in the labor income distribution. Loosening the rules on the use of temporary contracts actually generates more difficulties for women and low-educated individuals; it also appears to worsen youth employment prospects in general.

Asking how long young people (aged 19–34 years) should wait to find the right job, Chapter 9 by Filandri, Nazio, and O'Reilly examines the difference the family makes in this “waiting” decision. They use cross-sectional and longitudinal EU-SILC data (2005–2012) for five countries (Finland, France, Italy, Poland, and the United Kingdom), which are illustrative of different transition regimes. They also compare whether taking the first available opportunity or holding out for something better affects the quality of jobs that young people are able to secure. In addition, they explore whether early experiences of unemployment affect later occupational conditions in terms of pay and skill levels. Comparing the impact of family status on the transitions and timing affecting young people, their findings show reinforced patterns of stratification: Young people from work-rich, higher occupational status families were able to make better transitions in terms of job quality than was the case for lower status families. These results raise significant questions about the locus for policy interventions in addressing the legacies of family inequalities for young people today.

Berloffia, Matteazzi, and Villa undertake an analysis of intergenerational inequality and social mobility in Chapter 10. They investigate how this transmission varies for young men and women (aged 25–34 years) across a range of different groups of countries. Using the 2011 EU-SILC ad hoc module on the intergenerational transmission of disadvantages, they estimate the extent to which parents' employment during young people's adolescence affects their employment status at approximately 30 years of age. They find that having had a working mother

during adolescence reduces the likelihood of being workless for both sons and daughters at approximately age 30 years in all country groups, except in the Nordic countries; the effects of fathers' working condition are less widespread across countries. This suggests that the consequences of different labor market institutions, family models, and welfare regimes on the intergenerational transmission of worklessness are not very clear-cut. In all country groups (except the Nordic countries), policies should pay attention to mothers' employment—not only when their children are in their early years of life but also during their adolescence. Helping mothers to remain in or re-enter the labor market might have important consequences for the future employment prospects of both their daughters and their sons.

Considering the decision by young people (aged 18–34 years) to leave or to return to the parental home, Chapter 11 by Mazzotta and Parisi examines the effects of partnership and employment before and after the onset of the economic crisis (2005–2013) for different groups of countries. They find that the Great Recession has reduced the probability of leaving home and increased the probability of returning, with differences across country groups. The probability of leaving home decreased in Continental countries at the beginning of the Great Recession, but it remained stable in Southern and Eastern Europe. Southern European countries show an increase in returns home throughout the entire period. Finally, leaving and returning home seem more closely linked to partnership than to employment; at the same time, starting a new family is indirectly affected by employment.

How young adults (aged 18–34 years) who are co-residing with their parents contribute to household expenses has not received significant attention to date in the literature on youth transitions. In Chapter 12, Medgyesi and Nagy draw on EU-SILC 2010 data for 17 EU countries to examine how resources are pooled in these households. They find that income sharing in the household attenuates income differences between household members because it helps those with low resources. At the same time, income sharing in the household tends to increase inequalities for young adults living with their parents. Some young adults stay at home longer in order to enjoy better economic well-being, some stay longer as a strategy to overcome the difficulties faced in the labor market or the housing market or both, whereas others remain at home longer in order to support their family of origin.

The evidence presented by the chapters in Part II indicates the persistent importance of family resources (or the lack of them) in affecting the capability to move out of joblessness (Berloff, Matteazzi, and Villa, this volume; Mazzotta and Parisi, this volume). In some cases, family resources allow some young people to “wait” for the right opportunity (Filandri et al., this volume). For other young people, it is not a question of “waiting” as they have nowhere else to go; while some stay at home to support other family members (Medgyesi and Nagy, this volume). Flek et al. (this volume) show that waiting longer than six months

can have deleterious long-term effects that may culminate in becoming youth who are “left behind.” The extent to which young people are able to act is clearly shaped by the resources on which they can rely. Whether these are private family resources or collective public goods or agencies will vary by country, region, and class.

1.7.3. Part III: Transitions Across Europe

One of the distinctive characteristics of the recent period of youth unemployment has been the increased level of labor mobility across Europe (O’Reilly et al. 2015). A range of European initiatives that includes directives, social security coordination, and information services has sought to encourage EU cross-border labor mobility so as to contribute to better labor market matching by remedying intra-EU skill gaps and skill shortages. EU cross-border labor mobility of often young and high-qualified workers has become particularly important since the 2004 and 2007 accessions of Central and Eastern European countries (Galgóczi, Leschke, and Watt 2009, 2012). The trend has been further enhanced and diversified with the Great Recession, which led to increased flows of Southern Europeans to the North as a result of the economic downturn in their own countries (Kahanec and Zimmermann 2016).

Recent intra-EU labor migration might represent a key tool for remedying youth unemployment by providing work opportunities for young unemployed in the countries with more abundant work opportunities (Berg and Besharov 2016). Migration experience might provide important individual-level benefits and give signals to employers who value a set of skills and characteristics that living and working abroad help to develop. These can range from cognitive language skills to noncognitive skills such as independence, self-initiative, intercultural competence, and increased flexibility. However, migration can also lead to suboptimal labor allocation, with substantial numbers of migrant workers being employed below their skill levels and often facing poorer working conditions than their peers when they return home (Clark and Drinkwater 2008; Johnston, Khattab, and Manley 2015).

To examine young migrants’ (aged 15–35 years) labor market integration, in Chapter 13 Akgüç and Beblavý use pooled data from the European Social Survey (2002–2015). They analyze labor market outcomes (unemployment, hours worked, contract type, and overqualification) across an aggregate of European destination countries by migrant origin (Southern European, Eastern European, intra-EU, and non-EU) vis-à-vis natives. They show that young migrants of all origin clusters have poorer labor market outcomes than nationals. In particular, after controlling for education, gender, age, country, and year effects, migrants from Eastern and Southern Europe display important differences vis-à-vis nationals in terms of having a higher propensity to be unemployed, to be employed on a temporary employment contract, and to be overqualified. Moreover, the analysis reveals a gender gap in women’s disfavor.

Building on this analysis and deepening it, Chapter 14 by Spreckelsen, Leschke, and Seeleib-Kaiser examines the quantitative and qualitative labor market integration of young recent migrants (aged 20–34 years) in Germany and the United Kingdom. The assumption is that because of different reservation wages and variations in the applicable migration policy regimes, migrants from Central Eastern Europe (EU8), Bulgaria and Romania (EU2), Southern Europe, and the remaining EU will have qualitatively different outcomes in destination labor markets. Using German microcensus data and the UK-LFS, the chapter focuses descriptively on levels of employment and income; on marginal, fixed-term, and (solo) self-employment; and on overqualification of migrants compared to nationals before and after the economic crisis. The authors find that despite institutional differences and policy regimes regarding EU migrant workers, young EU migrant citizens are well integrated into the labor markets of both the two destination countries (particularly the United Kingdom) in terms of employment rates. However, their qualitative labor market integration seems to mirror the existing stratification across regions of Europe: EU8 and EU2 citizens often work in precarious and atypical employment, youth from Southern Europe take a middle position, and youth from the remaining EU countries do as well, or better, on several indicators than their national peers.

The entry route of young migrants from Eastern European countries (EU8) into a foreign labor market is a central focus of Chapter 15 by Ortlieb and Weiss. Focusing on the Austrian labor market, an important destination for EU8 migrants, these authors examine the role of labor market intermediaries (LMIs), such as public employment services, online job portals, and temporary work agencies, in facilitating this transition. Based on semistructured interviews with representatives of employers, LMIs, and young migrants (aged 18–34 years), they find that online job portals are the most common LMIs used and that the information services offered by LMIs are more relevant than matchmaking and administrative services. The relevance of LMI types and services varies across sectors. To varying degrees, LMIs fulfill specific functions in these sectors, such as reducing transaction costs, managing risks associated with the employment relationship, and building networks. The results can inform the design of policy measures aimed at improving the labor market opportunities of young migrants from Eastern Europe, such as the provision of cost-free information and matchmaking services and monitoring of LMIs in order to prevent exploitation of young migrants, and they can also inform future theoretical models accounting for youth migration.

Finally, going beyond understanding what happens to young people when they move abroad to find work, we also examine what happens when, and if, they return home. In Chapter 16, Masso et al. examine the labor market trajectories of return migrants to Estonia and Slovakia. They analyze how the characteristics of young return migrants (aged 18–34 years) differ from those of their peers who either stayed in Estonia and Slovakia or are still working in another European

country. They also investigate the short-term labor market outcomes of returnees relative to the two other groups. The analysis is based on national LFS data sets from 2009–2013. The authors find that return migrants, in both countries, are more likely to be young, male, and overqualified before their return compared to stayers. Return migrants in Slovakia initially face a higher risk of short-term unemployment, but they exit unemployment registries faster than stayers. In contrast, Estonian returnees who register with the labor office exit the registry at a slower pace than the unemployed in general. Masso et al.'s findings can inform policymaking aimed at reintegrating young return migrants into home-country labor markets under changing economic conditions and varied welfare support structures.

Altogether, the four chapters in Part III provide fresh insights into the experiences of young migrants during the Great Recession. Although European youth (particularly from a number of Central and Eastern countries of origin and—more recently—Southern Europe) show relatively high mobility and have comparatively high employment rates, some of them are also more prone to skills–occupation mismatch, atypical working conditions, and vulnerability compared to nationals in the destination countries to which they migrate.

1.7.4. Part IV: Challenging Futures for Youth

Drawing this volume to a close, the chapters in Part IV identify a number of key issues that will remain significant in future years. These chapters focus on the concept of NEETs; the consequences of overeducation, gender, and ethnic differences; the promises and drawbacks of youth self-employment; young people's attitudes; and what possibilities there are for trade unions to organize the next generation of young workers.

Starting with the concept of NEETs, Mascherini provides an overview in Chapter 17 of the origin of the concept and how it entered the European policy agenda. He reviews the characteristics, evolution, and composition of the NEET population in Europe using EU-LFS data. He then proposes disaggregating the NEET indicator so as to better address the heterogeneity of different subgroups of young people categorized as NEETs. These subgroups include re-entrants into the labor market or education, the short- and long-term unemployed, young people unavailable because of illness or disability, young people unavailable because of family responsibilities, discouraged workers, and other inactives. The chapter discusses the diversity of member states in terms of size and composition of the NEET population, as well as their STW transition patterns. This is linked with an analysis of the first year of the implementation of the European Youth Guarantee and the concrete measures adopted by member states in order to address the needs of the different subgroups of NEETs.

In contrast to the NEET population, the problem of overeducation is perceived as a consequence of the expansion of higher education and the lack of

appropriately skilled jobs for graduates. Well-qualified young people may have to enter employment that is below their qualification level, which in turn can have long-term consequences for their future labor market success. Drawing on EU-LFS data to construct quarterly time series of both youth (aged 15–24 years) and adult (aged 25–64 years) overeducation between 1997 and 2011 for 29 European countries, Chapter 18 by McGuinness, Bergin, and Whelan assesses the rate of overeducation among various age cohorts across countries and over time. Using time-series techniques, the authors find that youth overeducation is substantially driven by the composition of education provision, aggregate labor demand, and labor market flexibility.

Gender and ethnicity differences after a period of nonemployment are the focus of Chapter 19 by Zuccotti and O'Reilly. Their analysis is based on the Office for National Statistics Longitudinal Study, a large-scale data set from England and Wales that follows employment and occupational outcomes for individuals from 2001 (aged 16–29 years) to 2011 (aged 26–39 years). Being NEET in 2001 leads to approximately 17 pp less chance of being employed 10 years later (while controlling for comparable levels of education, social background, and neighborhood deprivation). However, this penalty varies across ethnic groups. The NEET scar is less severe among Indian and Bangladeshi men than among White British men by more than half. In contrast, the scars appear to be deeper for Pakistani and Caribbean women than for White British women.

Self-employment for youth has been widely promoted at the national and European level as a response to changing labor market conditions (European Commission 2010). But how beneficial is self-employment for young people? Is it a new form of precarious and poor-quality employment? Despite considerable interest among policymakers in measures to stimulate self-employment and entrepreneurship, there is limited comparative evidence about the nature and quality of self-employment, as well as the job-creation propensities of these enterprises. Ortlieb, Sheehan, and Masso address this gap in Chapter 20 using a comparative mixed methods approach. In addition to a range of secondary data sources, they draw on in-depth interviews with founders of business start-ups (aged 18–34 years) in six countries—Estonia, Germany, Ireland, Poland, Spain, and the United Kingdom—focusing on two industries (cultural and creative, and communication technologies). The analysis takes account of the differences between self-employed people who work as sole traders—sometimes under conditions that have been termed “bogus self-employment”—and those business founders who run an enterprise with employees. The findings suggest that for some young people, self-employment presents an option that offers high-quality jobs. A group of young self-employed people report that they can use and further develop their skills, and they appreciate the high degrees of autonomy and flexibility. However, the actual volume of jobs created through self-employment is rather low. Moreover, job quality is impaired by poor social protection, with negative consequences

especially in the long term. Policies need to address the high risks associated with self-employment in relation to unemployment, health care, and pension benefits.

Another dimension of future challenges discussed in this volume relates to changing attitudes toward and values regarding work among young people compared to previous generations. In Chapter 21, Hajdu and Sik conceptualize and operationalize different aspects of work values. They draw on international data sets (World Values Survey/European Values Study, European Social Survey, and International Social Survey Programme) to test for more than 30 countries whether work values differ across birth cohorts, age groups, and periods. The most important result is that significant gaps do not exist among the birth cohorts regarding the centrality of work, employment commitment, or extrinsic and intrinsic work values. Consequently, the authors argue that generations are not significantly divided in their work values in contemporary Europe.

The final challenge examined here looks at the problem of low youth unionization in Europe. Chapter 22 by Vandaele argues that the low and decreasing rate of youth unionization in the majority of European countries is not the outcome of a generational shift in attitudes and beliefs regarding the value of trade unions. Rather, this is a result of the decline of union membership as a social practice and the diminishing exposure of young people to unionism at the workplace. The chapter illustrates with a number of examples that unions have a large amount of agency in developing effective, tailor-made strategies for organizing young workers and thereby strengthening their collective voice.

1.8. CONCLUSIONS

The book draws to a close by providing an integrated analysis of the findings of all the research presented in the volume. We discuss the challenges of comparing youth transitions across countries and the importance of using a wider range of indicators and a more comprehensive policy focus. First, we argue that the concept of economic production encapsulates some of the key dimensions and foci for policy initiatives related to VET, labor market flexibility, insecurity, and mobility. Second, we contend that an exclusive focus on this domain risks undervaluing the continued importance of the sphere of social reproduction, the role of family legacies, and how these affect established and emerging forms of inequality. Third, we propose that given the complexity and variety of youth transitions, policy initiatives need to attend simultaneously to both dimensions so as to develop multifocused strategies for ensuring successful youth transitions. The final chapter concludes with an outlook on what directions are required for future policymaking and research targeted at identifying sustainable bridges that facilitate youth labor market transitions.

NOTES

- 1 The research presented here draws evidence from an EU-funded interdisciplinary research project involving 25 partners from 19 European countries, including Turkey (<http://www.style-research.eu>). This was funded from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development, and demonstration under grant agreement No. 613256.
- 2 The NEET share is higher if we consider the age group 20–34 years, which stood at 18.9% in 2015—this is approximately 17.6 million young people in the EU28 (Eurostat 2017, EU-LFS, not shown).

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