



Into the Vicious Cycle of Precarity: Labour Market, Precarious Work, Social Vulnerability and Youth: The case of Greece within the EU context

Nikos Papadakis

Professor and Director of the Centre for Political Research & Documentation (KEPET), Department of Political Science, University of Crete

Deputy Director of the University of Crete Research Center for the Humanities, the Social and Education Sciences (UCRC)

Member of the ECPR Political Culture Research Network, Rethymnon, Greece

Maria Drakaki

PhD in Political Science and Researcher at KEPET,

Department of Political Science, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece

Collaborating Teaching Staff at the Hellenic Open University

Sofia Saridaki

PhD Candidate and Researcher at KEPET

Department of Political Science, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece

Vassilis Dafermos

Professor and Director of the Laboratory of Social Statistics

Department of Political Science, University of Crete, Rethymnon, Greece

ABSTRACT

In the last decade, there has been a widespread expansion of both precarious work and precarious forms of employment (such as temporary and low-qualified jobs, seasonal and part-time jobs etc.), in which a growing share of young people work. The impact of precarious work on young people is likely to be permanent, while it seems to affect (even over-determine) their life courses. Non-smooth and early transitions into labour market are very likely to worsen progressively their long-term life chances (Lodovici & Semenza, 2012: 7). Undoubtedly, the long-lasting global economic Crisis and the subsequent Recession, has heavily affected the state of play in the labour market worldwide, provoking severe modifications both in the field of employment and countries' social cohesion. Based on the above mentioned, the paper deals with precarious work in general, while it emphasizes precarious work among youth. It initially captures, briefly, the state of play in terms of the impact of the Crisis on the widening of the phenomenon of precarious work and then it focuses on theoretical insights and critical conceptual definitions concerning precariousness in the labour market. Further, based on secondary quantitative data analysis, it analyses the key- parameters and facets of precarious work (focusing on youth) in the European Union and, mainly, in Greece. Additionally, it briefly presents parameters of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on

precariousness in Greece. Finally, the paper explores the correlation between precarious work and social vulnerability, especially among young people.

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Key-words: precarious work, labour market, youth, vulnerability, Greece, European Union

1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, there is no doubt that during the last decade both the field of labour market and the working conditions have greatly affected by the impact of the economic Crisis and the consequent multi-parameter long-lasting Recession in the European Union, which have caused a variety of changes and modifications in terms of the components of the employment field and working conditions, -causing, among others, the gradual expansion of precarious work.

Within the above mentioned framework, it is worth mentioned that the phenomenon of precarious work was existing before the outset of the Crisis in Europe. However, the strict fiscal measures that taken in order to face the Crisis (e.g. the Medium-Term Fiscal Strategy Frameworks (Memoranda) in the case of Greece) were deregulated the economy and the labour markets of the Member-States, especially those in the European South), sharply widespreading both unemployment rates, especially those of the workforce aged 15-24 and 55-64, and cuts in welfare provisions and entitlements (McKay et al., 2012: 5). In fact, in several national cases, the youth constitutes the *“age group that affected more (from the Crisis) as its unemployment rate has risen dramatically and its wages have decreased”* (Green, 2017: 7).

Even though youth unemployment is falling, since 2014, it still remains high, while the total unemployment rates differ substantially across Europe, which eventually affects youth unemployment. What is indeed alarming is the fact that *“for the first time since the Second World War, there is a real risk that today’s young adults – the most educated generation we have ever had – may end up less well-off than their parents”* (European Commission 2017a: 9).

The above mentioned in adjunction with the expansion of social inequalities, the shrinking of the Welfare State and consequently the increase of poverty rates, -directly related to the vertical increase of people’s unemployment rates- (see in detail Papadakis et al, 2020; Papadakis et al., 2017a: 6-11; Papadakis et al., 2017b: 10-11; Kotroyannos et al., 2015: 269; Matsaganis, 2013: 10-12; Matsaganis, 2011: 510), had a direct impact on the social fabric in Greece and, consequently, resulting in its social transformation and the weakening of social cohesion (see in detail Papadakis et al., 2017b: 6-8; Papadakis et al., 2020; Featherstone, 2011: 202; Matsaganis, 2013: 3; OECD, 2014: 1).

This unstable state of play caused a *“significant growth in a wide range of non-standard forms of employment relationship with the result that significant numbers of Europe’s workers are now excluded from welfare benefits and/or employment protections.”* (McKay et al., 2012: 5). While over

the years, it has strengthened the emergence and expansion of new forms of precarious work, including part-time, undeclared or uninsured work, "temporary" employment, seasonal work etc. (Eurofound, 2018: 1; McKay et al., 2012: 16; ILO, 2011: 5) as well as the intensity of the phenomenon "just in time workforce" (Rifkin, 2003: 9).

In other words, a new labour market situation has emerged, in which new forms of employment dominate, characterized by precariousness and flexibility, such as part-time employment, undeclared work, rotating employment etc. While, at the same time, young people seem to be facing more of these transformations in the field of employment (Green, 2017: 7).

2 PRECARIOUS WORK AND PRECARIOUS FORMS OF EMPLOYMENT: THEORETICAL AND DEFINITIONAL ISSUES

As regards the definitional framework of "precarious work", even though the debate on the conceptual delimitation of the term remain an "open" issue to this day (see in detail Spyridakis, 2018: 17-53; ILO, 2011: 5-7), as the increasing intensity and extent of precarious and occasionally employment as well as their key-characteristics differ from country to country based on the historical development of each country's labour market at national and local level, and the context that surrounds it (i.e. the labour market) (ILO, 2011: 7).

Thus, precarious work can be defined as: work characterized by uncertainty, instability and insecurity with limited social benefits and law protections, and employees bear the risks of work (Kalleberg and Vallas 2017: 1). Precarious work *"has moved to the centre of debates on the future of employment as a spreading consensus expects globalization, new technologies, employer risk shifting and more heterogeneous workforces to continue to promote more commodified forms of labour"* (Rubery et al., 2018: 510). In the European Union, these changes and transitions have taken place, mainly, in the last decades (1980s onwards) of the 20th century, when the domination of precarious forms of employment, such as part-time work, fixed-term contracts, temporary work etc. constituted significant components-forms of employment in defining and understanding the concept and the field of precarious work (McKay et al., 2012: 16).

In this context, a growing share of people, especially the youth ones, even having jobs, it seems that in recent years young people are increasingly working in temporary and low-qualified jobs whose the impact on them is likely to be permanent and difficult on their life courses (Lodovici & Semenza, 2012: 7), as non-smooth and early transitions into labour market are very likely to worsen progressively their long-term life chances ("scaring effect" phenomenon) (Lodovici & Semenza, 2012: 7).

Moreover, precarious work is associated with skills mismatch (as in the case of Italy), deconstructed labour markets (as in the case of Greece), random transitions (such as in Spain), where the *"employment trajectories do not seem to lead anywhere, and the sensation of being trapped is profoundly embedded"* (Lodovici & Semenza, 2012: 13-14).

Within this unstable context nowadays, precarious forms of employment can be classified based on two major categories of employment **in terms of contractual arrangements**, namely (ILO, 2011: 7):

i. The limited duration of the contract, including forms of employment contracts such as fixed-term, short-term, temporary, seasonal, day-labour and casual labour (ILO, 2011: 7).

ii. The type/form of the employment relationship, including types/forms of employment relationships such as: triangular and disguised employment relationships, bogus self-employment, sub-contracting contracts and agency contracts (ILO, 2011: 7). In particular, regarding triangular and disguised employment relationships as well as bogus self-employment are related, many times, with decreased employment terms and conditions and they often constitute a way of shifting the burden of the responsibility and the risks associated with employment from the employer to the employee/worker, -risks related with such employment relations, e.g. dismissals (McKay et al., 2012: 6).

The above mentioned precarious forms of employment are characterized by four main working conditions: i. low wages, ii. inadequate and insufficient protection from termination of employment, iii. lack of access to social structures but also to the privileges (benefits) that are mostly related to permanent and full employment, iv. absence or limited access of employees to exercise their labour rights (ILO, 2011: 7).

According to ILO (2011: 5), both precarious forms of employment and their characteristics tend to be expanded and “normalized” in the labour market due to “employers’ ingenuity” inventing new ways in order to circumvent legislative framework or/and find loopholes in laws to increase the profitability of their business/enterprise and maintain their sustainability.

3 EUROPEAN KEY-CHALLENGES AND INITIATIVES TO COMBAT PRECARIOUS WORK

Unemployment, youth unemployment, poverty and their persisting correlation constitute probably the major challenges in the EU, at the moment. According to the Euro-barometer, more than 8 out of 10 Europeans consider unemployment, social inequalities and migration the top challenges, that the EU is facing, while more than the half of the Europeans consider that not everyone has chances to succeed and life chances would be more limited for the young- next generation (see Eurobarometer 2017, as cited in European Commission 2017a: 20). According to the European Commission, unemployment rates “are falling (constantly since 2014) but differ substantially across Europe....(while) the crisis has affected parts of Europe in different ways, but across the Union, it is younger generations that have been hit particularly hard” (European Commission, 2017a: 9). Further, it seems, that precarious work gradually becomes “the new norm to which employment and social protection systems must adjust but the motivators for, and likely consequences of, legitimising and normalising these employment forms are complex and potentially contradictory. Precarious work is best defined as the absence of those aspects of the Standard Employment Relationship (SER) that support the decommodification of labour” (Rubery et al., 2018: 511).

In the last decade (2010-2020), there has been an increasing intensification of political interventions, at the European level, aiming at reducing precarious work and protecting and further improving working conditions (Eurofound, 2020a: 3-4).

The above mentioned intensification is due on the one hand to the impact of the multidimensional economic Recession on employment and labour market, and on the other hand due to Mega-Trends that are taking place and seem to gradually prevail (e.g. globalization, digital economy,

digitalization, demographic and social changes, climate change, etc.) (Eurofound, 2020a: 3-4). These Mega-Trends had a clear impact on the structure of economy and labor market, industrial relations systems, and business models, having, in turn, direct impact on work relations, forms of employment and contracts types and, consequently, on social welfare systems in Europe (Eurofound, 2020a: 3-4) (see Figure 1).

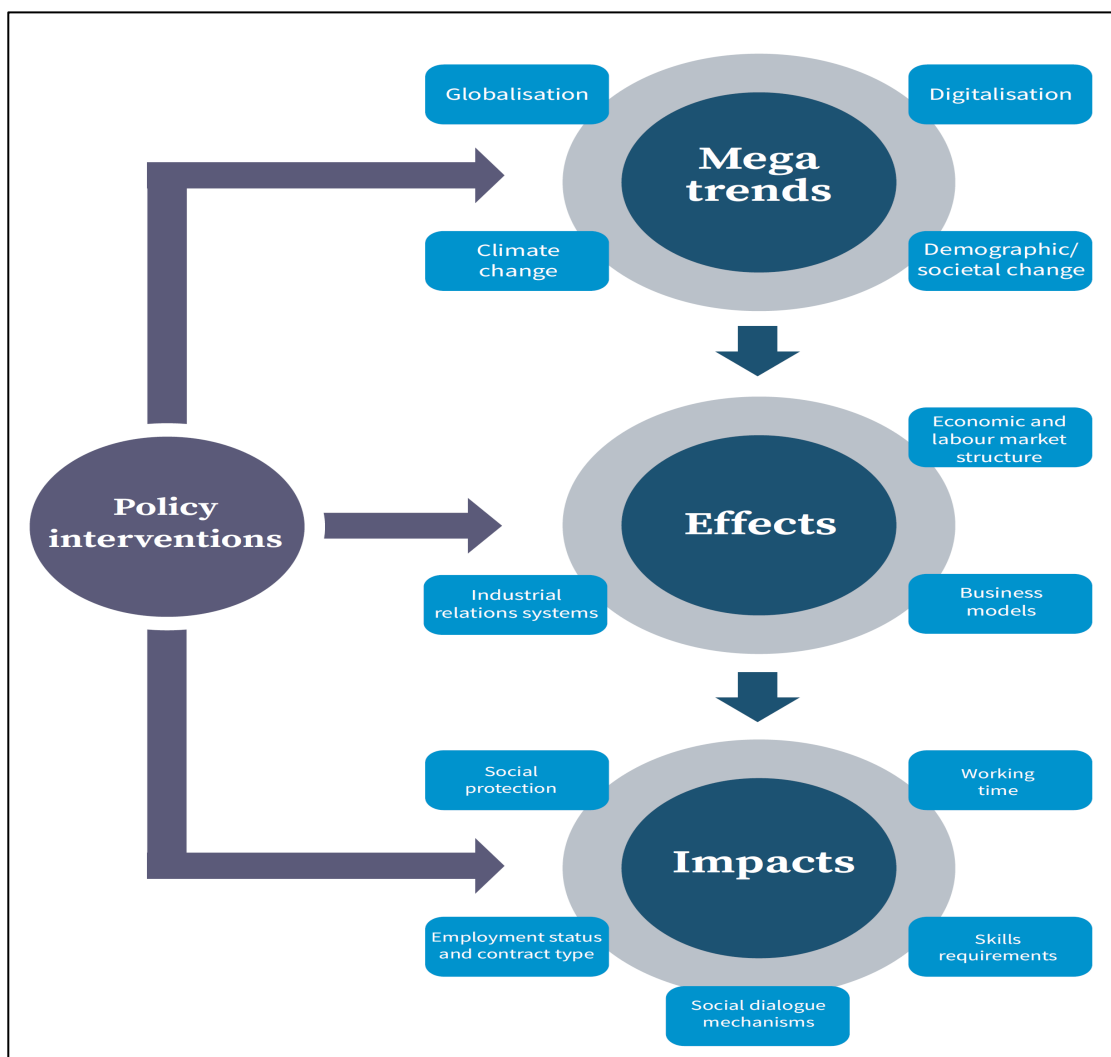


Figure 1: Relationship between megatrends, effects and impacts on the labour market, and policy interventions

Source: Eurofound, 2020a: 4.

At this point, it is worth mentioning that based on the recent findings of Eurofound (2020a), 8 key challenges are recorded in the field of employment for the EU, which are directly related to the intensity of precarious work at the European level (Eurofound, 2020a: 2). More specifically:

1. Flexibilisation: Although, the total share of non-standard employment has remained stable, in general, the share of compound non-standard employment has been increased, for instance marginal part-time work, very short temporary contracts, undeclared work and casual work (Eurofound, 2020a: 2).

2. Part-time work: *“Low-hours part-time work is often linked to difficulty making ends meet, and low-hours part-time workers are over-represented among multiple job holders. One-quarter of part-time work is involuntary”* (Eurofound, 2020a: 2).

3. Temporary contracts: According to the Eurofound (2020a), even though there is no change (almost stagnated in 14%) in overall percentage of temporary contract workers during the period from 2008 to 2018, it has been recorded an expansion in the use of temporary contracts mainly for new labour market entrants. In this new employment context, the share of involuntary temporary work stands at 60% (Eurofound, 2020a: 2).

4. Self-Employment: Regarding self-employment, there are a number of changes at both sectoral and structural level, with upward trends in the rates of self-employed without employees (Eurofound, 2020a: 2). Although in most cases self-employment is voluntary, a quarter of the self-employed can be described as precarious (Eurofound, 2020: 2). It is worth noting that in 2018, 17% of the self-employed showed vulnerability and precariousness (Eurofound/Wilkens, 2018).

5. Polarisation: During the period 2008-2018, it is observed, throughout the EU, an increasing polarization, as there is an increase in employment rates in jobs that are high-paid but also low-paid. In contrast, employment growth in mid-level earnings was lower (Eurofound, 2020a: 2).

6. Rising insecurity: *“Individuals on non-standard contracts are less likely to have access to full employment rights, social protection and representation. A high share of temporary and part-time workers do not have access to a range of social benefits. Over the observed period, there has been an increase in the share of workers at risk of poverty”* (Eurofound, 2020a: 2). Clearly, there is an alarming correlation between precarious work and risk-of-poverty. Young people, women, low-skilled people, migrants and disabled people have higher levels of insecurity in terms of their employment, as they are more likely to work in precarious jobs. In particular, a key factor of youth employment in precarious jobs is the difficulty of transition from education and training systems to stable employment (standard employment) (Duell, 2004: 93).

7. New business models: The rise and establishment of new business models of teleworking, e.g. platform work, are correlated and linked to other trends observed within the EU (Eurofound, 2020a: 2) and, at the same time, are a key parameter in increasing the precariousness of employees in Europe.

8. COVID-19 pandemic: Last but not least, although in several EU Member States (including in Greece), measures have already been taken to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis on the economy, employment and the welfare state, it seems that its impact will be particularly significant in employment (Eurofound, 2020a: 2) and will lead to further transformations in the labour market.

Especially, for the workforce, that work in precarious forms of employment (seasonal employment, temporary and short-term employment, part-time work etc.), such as in the sectors of tourism, transport/transfer, catering and accommodation (see in detail CCSA, 2020: 20; INSETE/Ikkos & Koutsos, 2019: 3) (see Table 1).

Economic sector	Current impact of crisis on economic output	Baseline employment situation (global estimates for 2020 prior to COVID-19)			
		Level of employment (000s)	Share in global employment (%)	Wage ratio (av. monthly sector earnings/av. total earnings)	Share of women (%)
Education	Low	176560	5.3	1.23	61.8
Human health and social work activities	Low	136244	4.1	1.14	70.4
Public administration and defence; compulsory social security	Low	144241	4.3	1.35	31.5
Utilities	Low	26589	0.8	1.07	18.8
Agriculture; forestry and fishing	Low-Medium*	880373	26.5	0.72	37.1
Construction	Medium	257041	7.7	1.03	7.3
Financial and insurance activities	Medium	52237	1.6	1.72	47.1
Mining and quarrying	Medium	21714	0.7	1.46	15.1
Arts, entertainment and recreation, and other services	Medium-high*	179857	5.4	0.69	57.2

Table 1: Current impact (impact degree) of the COVID-19 Pandemic by sector of economic activity
Source: ILO, 2020: 4-5.

Within this context, the European Union, recently, in order to tackle the phenomenon of precarious work (including undeclared work and bogus self-employment) and the fragmentation of the labour market and working inequalities, has proceeded to the establishment of a set of initiatives and measures towards the decrease of their impact (i.e. precarious work and labour market fragmentation) on both workers, labour market and society (see in detail European Parliament, 2017: 8-34).

Specifically in 2017, the **European Pillar of Social Rights** came into force, after a long consultation process, starting in 2016 (European Commission, 2016a: 2-11; European Commission, 2016b: 1-18). This initiative aims to address the state of play, in short- and long-term, which has developed in the E.U., mainly due to the impact of the Crisis on the employment field and society, namely long-term and youth unemployment, increase in poverty rates, changes in working conditions (European Commission, 2017b: 3). In particular, the European Pillar of Social Rights is based on 20 key-principles, which are structured in the following axes (European Commission, 2017b: 4): “i. *Equal opportunities and access to the labour market*, ii. *Fair working conditions*, iii. *Social protection and inclusion*” (European Parliament, Council of the European Union, European Commission, 2017) in order to protect and ensure, effectively, current and, mainly, new rights for the European citizens (European Commission, 2017b: 4).

Moreover, the European Union has implemented a second initiative entitled “**European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work**”, which focuses on the improvement of working conditions.

Specifically, within the European Employment Strategy, in 2016, the European Union, by decision of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union, intensified the related actions and measures to combat undeclared work through the creation of a European Platform aiming to enhancing the cooperation between Member-States in more effective tackling undeclared work (see in detail European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2016: 12-20).

Based on the above mentioned and given that undeclared work is understood, according to the European Commission, as “*any paid activities that are lawful as regards their nature but not declared to public authorities, taking into account differences in the regulatory system of Member States*”(Commission of the European Communities, 2007: 2), the European Platform Tackling Undeclared Work “*aiming to improve working conditions, promote integration in the labour market and social inclusion, including better enforcement of law within those fields, and to the reduction of undeclared work and the emergence of formal jobs, thus avoiding the deterioration of the quality of work and of health and safety at work*” (European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2016: 16) via a set of actions, which include, inter alia, measures such as:

- i. improving knowledge about undeclared work;
- ii. improving knowledge and mutual understanding of the different systems and practices for dealing with undeclared work, including its cross-border aspects;
- iii. developing analyzes of the effectiveness of various policy measures to address undeclared work, including prevention and sanctions measures;
- iv. developing tools, such as law enforcement guidelines, good practices and common principles manuals for inspections, to address undeclared work and evaluate the experiences of such tools;
- v. organizing peer reviews to monitor the progress of the Member States which participate in the above mentioned peer reviews towards tackling undeclared work etc. (see in detail European Parliament & Council of the European Union, 2016: 17-18).

4. PRECARIOUS WORK IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

4.1 Part-time employment

According to Eurostat (2020g), in 2019 across the EU28 Member States, one in three (as regards the 15-24 age group) and one in five (as regards the 20-64 age group) employees worked part-time. More specifically, the highest rates of part-time employment for the 20-64 age group were observed in the Netherlands (46.8%) and Austria (27.5%), while the lowest in Bulgaria (1.8%) and Hungary (4.3%). As for the 15-24 age group, the highest rates for 2019 were recorded in the Netherlands (79.7%) and in Denmark (63.6%), whereas the lowest in Croatia (7.4%) and Bulgaria (7.5%) (Eurostat, 2020g). In the EU28 as a whole, half of part-time workers (49.9%) have an educational attainment level¹¹ corresponding to ISCED 3-4, 29.9% are graduates of higher education (ISCED 5-8), while 20.8% of them have an fall under the ISCED 0-2 category (Eurostat, 2020a).

¹¹ The educational attainment level is coded according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) categories as follows: ISCED 0-2 (pre-school, primary and lower secondary education), ISCED 3-4 (upper secondary and post-secondary education), ISCED 5-8 (higher education including Master’s and Doctoral level).

Throughout the last decade (2010-2019), the gender gap in part-time employment for all age groups was very big (Eurostat, 2020g). Regarding young workers, the part-time employment rate of women aged 15-24 was about two times higher than the rate for men of the same age. In 2019, the share of part-time workers aged 15-24 in the EU28 stood at 40.9% for women and 25.5% for men. According to Eurostat (2020g), the highest proportions as regards both genders were observed in the Netherlands (females: 86.6%, males: 72.9%) and Denmark (females: 74.2%, males: 53.1%). However, the largest differences between women and men were recorded in Slovenia (24.1 percentage points) and Sweden (22.9 percentage points), whereas the smallest in Romania (0.1 p.p.) and Latvia (0.6 p.p.) (Eurostat, 2020g).

In most EU28 countries, in 2019 there was a slight decrease in the rate of involuntary part-time employment in comparison to 2018 (EU28: 24.8% in 2018 and 23.6% in 2019) (Eurostat, 2020g). In 2019, the highest rates of employees who worked part-time due to lack of access to full-time employment were recorded in Greece (66.4%), Italy (65.8%) and Cyprus (56.9%). On the other hand, the lowest percentages were observed in Slovenia (4.8%) and in the Netherlands (5.4%) (Eurostat, 2020g).

In several countries, the rates of part-time and involuntary part-time work were found to be significantly disproportionate. In order to further analyse this issue, two correlations (derived from Eurofound, 2020a) are presented (Figures 2 and 3): the first between the variables “unemployment rate” and “involuntary part-time employment” and the second between the variables “part-time employment” and “involuntary part-time employment”.

According to Figure 2, the correlation between involuntary part-time employment rate and unemployment rate is positive and significant. In particular, the involuntary part-time rate tends to be much higher in countries with poor labour market performance (proxied in the graph by higher unemployment rates) and lower in countries with low unemployment rates (most of which with structurally high part-time employment shares). Typical examples of such countries are presented in the following table.

Table 2: Cases of countries in which the correlation between involuntary part-time employment rate and unemployment rate is positive and significant

Countries	Unemployment rate	Involuntary part-time employment
Greece (EL)	19.5%	70.1%
Spain (ES)	15.4%	55.8%
Italy (IT)	10.8%	65.7%
Cyprus (CY)	8.6%	63.9%
Czech Republic (CZ)	2.3%	6.5%
Germany (DE)	3.5%	10.2%
Netherlands (NL)	3.8%	7%
Austria (AT)	4.9%	10.5%

Source: The statistical data presented in the table were derived from the Eurostat surveys *lfsa_urgan*, *lfsi_pt_a*, and *lfsa_eppgai*:

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_urgan&lang=en;

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi_pt_a&lang=en;

https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_eppgai&lang=en

On the contrary, the correlation between part-time employment and involuntary part-time employment rates is negative and weak (Figure 3). It seems that the more widespread part-time employment is, the less likely it is to be involuntary. More specifically, in some countries high part-time employment rates coexist with very low shares of involuntary part-time employment, whereas in others the opposite occurs. Indicative examples for both of the aforementioned cases are listed in the table below.

Table 3: Cases of countries in which the correlation between part-time employment and involuntary part-time employment rates is negative and weak

Countries	Part time employment	Involuntary part-time employment
Netherlands (NL)	50.1%	7%
Belgium (BE)	24.5%	6.8%
Austria (AT)	27.3%	10.5%
Germany (DE)	26,8%	10.2%
Greece (EL)	9,1%	70.1%
Bulgaria (BG)	1,8%	56.9%
Romania (RO)	6,5%	54.2%
Italy (IT)	18,4%	65.7%

Source: The statistical data presented in the table were derived from the Eurostat surveys lfsa_urgan, lfsi_pt_a, and lfsa_eppgai:

- https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_urgan&lang=en;
- https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsi_pt_a&lang=en;
- https://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/show.do?dataset=lfsa_eppgai&lang=en

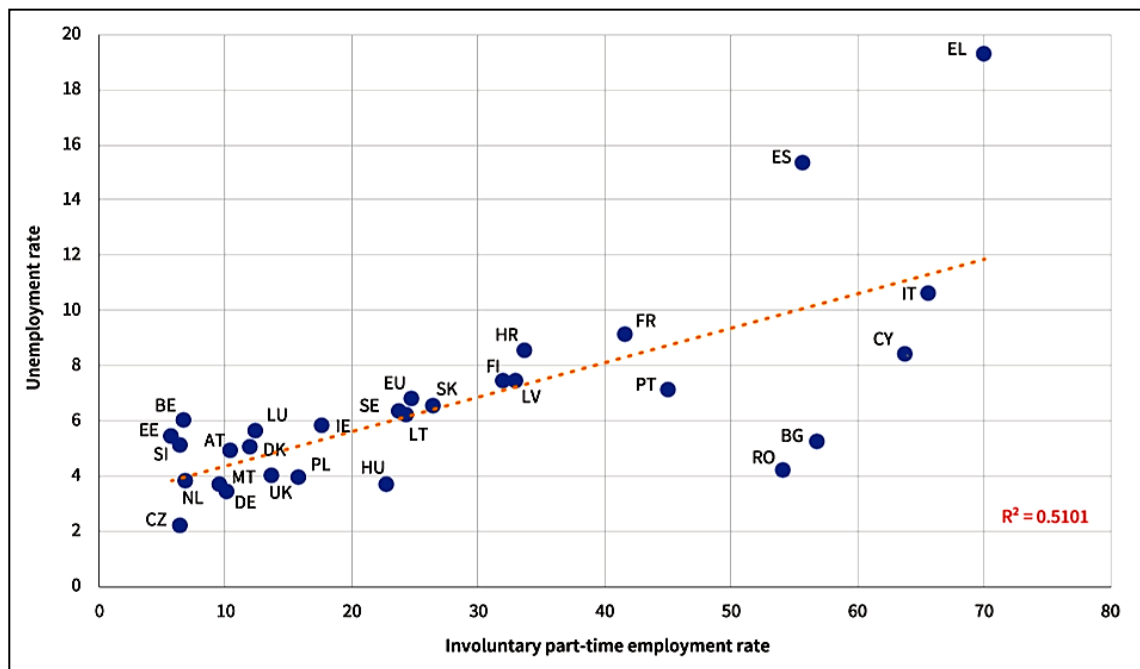


Figure 2: EU28 countries, 2018 – Age group 15-64, Relationship between unemployment rate and involuntary part-time employment rate

Source: EU-LFS, as cited in Eurofound, 2020a: 27.

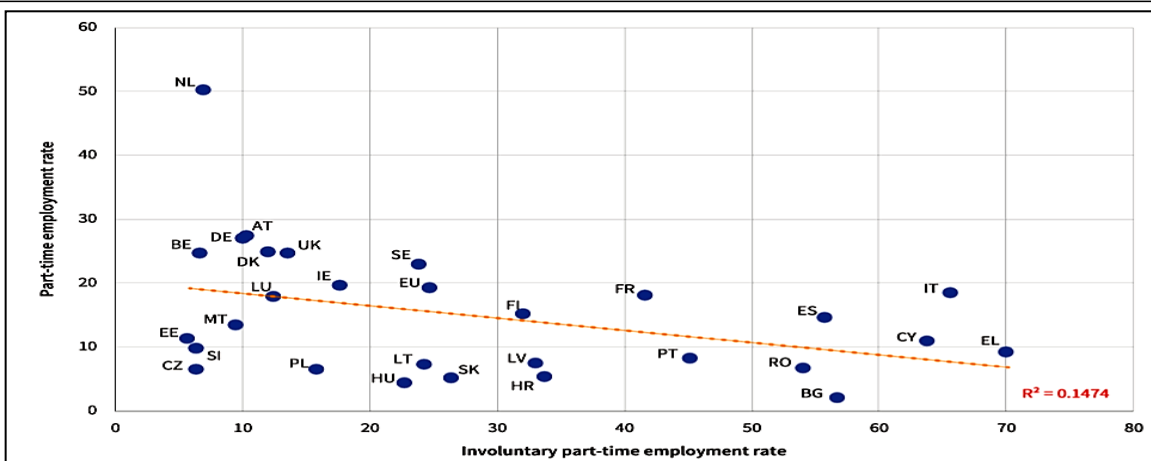


Figure 3: EU28 countries, 2018 – Age group 15-64, Relationship between part-time employment rate and involuntary part-time employment rate

Source: EU-LFS, as cited in Eurofound, 2020a: 27.

The “in-work poverty risk indicator” was added to the set of indicators the EU uses to monitor poverty and social exclusion (in 2003), acknowledging the fact that while employment seems to be the best way to avoid the risk of poverty, it may not be enough (European Commission, 2015). During the last decade (2010-2018), poverty risk rates were consistently higher for workers aged 16-29 than for those aged 25-64. In 2018, almost one tenth of workers in the EU28 countries were at risk of poverty. In the 25-64 age group this risk was slightly higher for men (9.9% vs. 8.6% for women), while in the 16-29 age group it was slightly higher for women (10.6% vs. 10.3% for men). (Eurostat, 2020c).

As Figure 4 indicates, in the EU28 countries in 2018 part-time workers were at twice the risk of poverty compared to full-time workers. In all countries, the risk of poverty for part-time employed people was higher than for full-time workers. It is worth noting that in some countries the percentage differences between the two types of employment (part-time and full-time) were very large. Such countries were Romania (51.5 percentage points), Bulgaria (25.8 percentage points) and Portugal (20.7 percentage points) (Eurostat, 2020d).

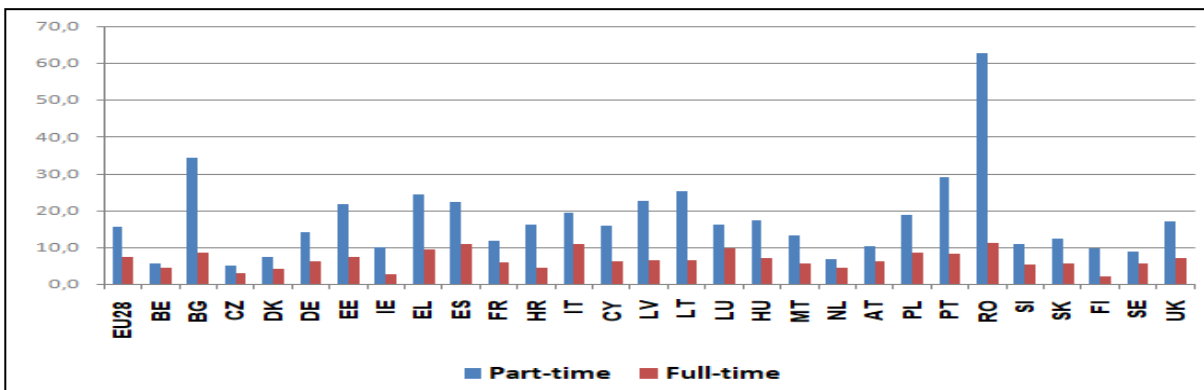


Figure 4: EU28 countries, 2018: In-work at-risk-of-poverty rate: part-time employment vs. full time employment

Source: Eurostat, 2020d.

4.2. Temporary employment

The rate of temporarily employed persons aged 15-24 in the EU28 Member States (Eurostat, 2020g), increased gradually from 2012 onwards. In 2019, the proportion of employees in temporary employment was much higher for young people in all EU28 countries (Eurostat, 2020g). More specifically, in the second quarter of 2019, almost half (42.8%) of employees aged 15-24 were employed under a temporary contract (Eurostat, 2020q), a percentage which was more than three times higher than the one of the 20-64 age group. In 2019, in all EU28 countries (Eurostat, 2020g) the percentages recorded for young employees in temporary employment were much higher than those for employees aged 25-64. As reported by Eurostat (2020q), in the second quarter of 2019, approximately 8 million young people (42.8%) were employed under a temporary contract. The share of temporary contracts for employees aged 15-24 was more than three times higher than that for employees aged 20-64 (12.6%). In 9 EU countries more than half of young people aged 15-24 worked on a temporary basis: Spain (69.5%), Italy (63.3%), Portugal (62.2%), Slovenia (61.2%), Poland (59.1%), France (56.1%), Sweden (53.7%), the Netherlands (51.8%) and Germany (50.6%). During the period 2010-2019 as regards the 15-24 age group, the rate of temporarily employed women aged 15-24 was slightly higher than that of men (by 1.7 percentage points).

In the EU28 countries, although in recent years the rates of involuntary temporary employment have shown a slight decrease (EU28, 2014: 56% - EU28, 2019: 51.1%), continue to remain high. In 2019 (Eurostat, 2020l), in many countries more than two thirds of the temporary employees were working involuntarily. Most young people aged 15-29 (35.7% for men and 38.9% for women) reported that they were working on a temporary basis because they could not find a permanent job (Eurostat, 2020l). The countries with the highest percentages regarding involuntary temporary employment in 2019 were Cyprus (91.3% for men and 94.6% for women) and Croatia (85.1% for men and 84.2% for women), while the lowest rates were observed in Austria (7.5% for men and 10.8% for women) and in Germany (11.6% for men and 13.1% for women) (Eurostat, 2020l).

Figure 5 illustrates that there is a fairly large difference in terms of involuntary temporary employment between the 15-29 and the 25-64 age groups (on average 22.9 percentage points in the EU28 countries). This, to some extent, can be attributed to the fact that many young people work under temporary employment status voluntarily because they are in education or training. However, as data suggest (Eurostat, 2020l), it shouldn't be ignored that a great deal of young workers are led into temporary employment, in the absence of an option for a permanent job. The only EU28 countries in which the percentage of the 15-29 age group slightly exceeded that of the 25-64 age group were Romania (0.8 percentage points) and Slovakia (0.7 percentage points). In the rest of the countries, the percentages of the 25-64 age group were higher, with differences ranging from 3.6 to 26.6 percentage points (Eurostat, 2020l).

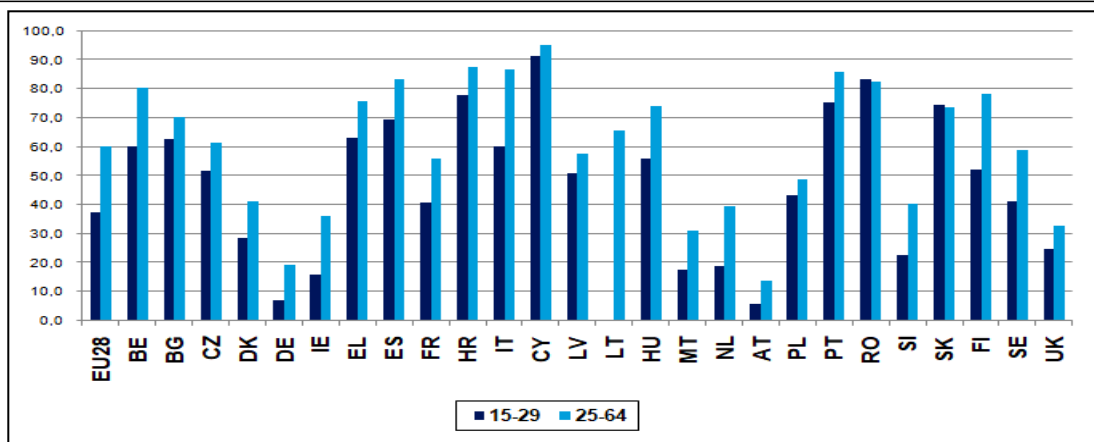


Figure 5: EU28 countries, 2019 – Age groups 15-29 and 25-64: Involuntary temporary employment by age group (% of temporary employment)
 Source: Eurostat, 2020l.

During the years 2010-2018, the risk of poverty of temporarily employed people increased significantly in most EU28 countries (Eurostat, 2020e). In 2018, nearly one tenth of temporary workers were at risk of falling into poverty (at higher proportion than part-time workers). Moreover, this risk was almost three times higher for employees with temporary jobs than for those with permanent jobs (Eurostat, 2020p). The EU28 countries with the highest rates regarding in-work at-risk-of-poverty ratio for temporary employment were recorded in Luxembourg (33%) and Hungary (31.1%), while the countries with the lowest rates were Finland (5%) and Czech Republic (6.1%) (Eurostat, 2020e).

5. ON THE STATE OF PLAY CONCERNING PRECARIOUS WORK IN GREECE (WITH EMPHASIS ON YOUNG PEOPLE)

5.1 Part-time employment

According to data (Eurostat, 2020m), in recent years Greece was the EU Member State with the highest youth unemployment rate continuously between 2012 and 2019 (apart from the year 2013 during which Spain recorded a slightly higher rate). With regard to the 15-24 age group, the unemployment rate after reaching a peak of 58.3% in 2013, decreased gradually, standing in 2019 at 35.2% of the active population (33.5% for men and 37.1% for women).

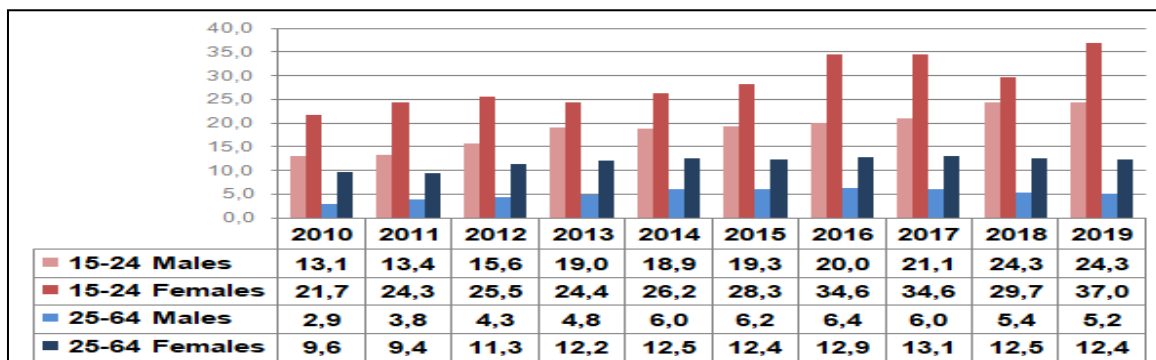


Figure 6: Greece, 2010-2019, Age groups 15-24 and 25-64: Part-time employment by sex and age (% total employment)
 Source: Eurostat, 2020h.

As illustrated in Figure 6 (Eurostat, 2020h), during the period 2010-2019 in Greece, the percentages of young men and women aged 15-24 working part time were much higher than those of the 25-64 age group. On average, the difference between men in the 15-24 and 25-64 age groups was 13.8 percentage points, while the difference between women in the same age groups was 16.8 percentage points. In both age groups, part-time employment was much more common among women. More specifically, the difference between the two sexes for the age group 15-24 ranged from 5.4 to 14.6 percentage points, whereas the difference for the age group 25-64 from 5.6 to 7.4 percentage points. In 2019, the part-time employment rate for 15-24 year-olds stood at its highest, with about a quarter of men and two-fifths of women working part-time (Eurostat, 2020h).

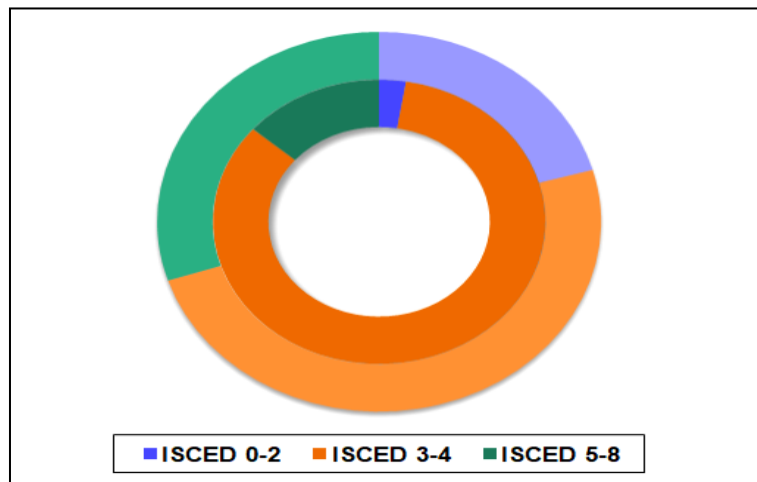


Figure 7: Greece, 2019 - Age groups 15-24 and 25-64: Part time employment by educational level (% of part time employees)
Source: Eurostat, 2020a.

Figure 7 shows the distribution of people who worked in 2019 on a part-time basis in Greece by educational level¹² in both age groups: 15-24 (internal cycle) and 25-64 (external cycle). It is evident that in both age groups the percentage of upper secondary and post-secondary education graduates prevails. Specifically, more than four-fifths (83.7%) of young people aged 15-24 and almost half of those aged 25-64 had an educational level corresponding to ISCED 3-4. The second more predominant category was ISCED level 5-8, which recorded a large percentage for the age group 25-64 (30%) and a much lower for the age group 15-24 (13.7%) (Eurostat, 2020a).

During the whole decade 2010-2019 (Eurostat, 2020f), the percentages of people working part-time due to the inability to find a full-time job in Greece were about twice as high as those of the EU28 (with a difference of 25-38.7 percentage points). Furthermore, they were particularly large for the 15-24 year-olds (Figure 8), ranging from 52.6% (in 2019) to 68.4% (in 2013). In 2019, the percentage regarding the 15-24 age group (52.6%) was one of the three highest in the EU28 (just after those of Italy and Romania). Moreover, in Greece the rate of involuntarily employed 15-24

¹² The educational attainment level is coded according to the International Standard Classification of Education (ISCED) categories as follows: ISCED 0-2 (pre-school, primary and lower secondary education), ISCED 3-4 (upper secondary and post-secondary education), ISCED 5-8 (higher education including Master's and Doctoral level).

year-olds in 2019 was considerably higher for women (60.2% compared to 43.1% of men). (Eurostat, 2020f).

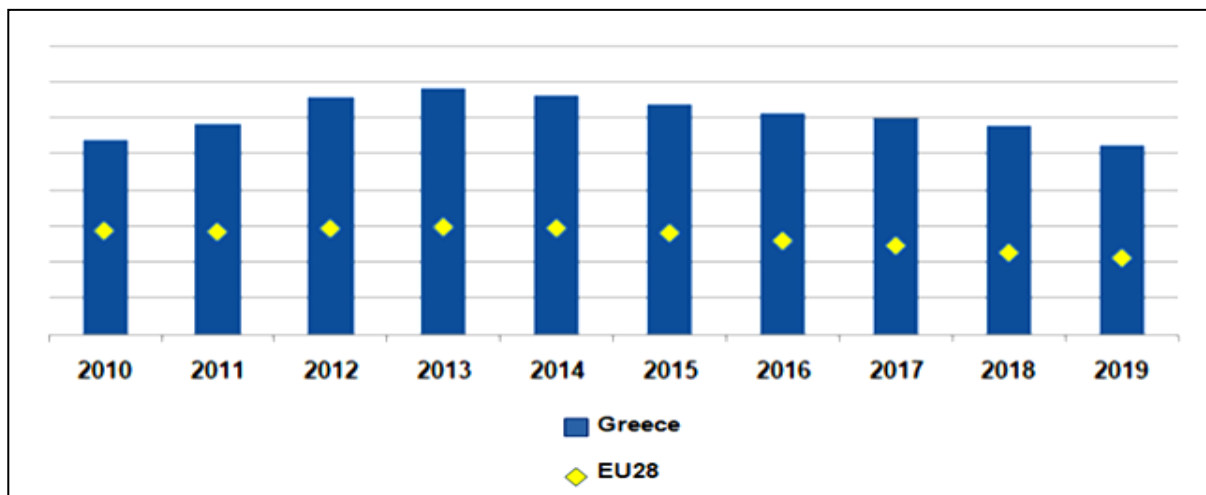


Figure 8: Greece and EU28, 2010-2019, Age group 15-24: Involuntary part-time employment (% of part-time employment)
Source: Eurostat, 2020f.

In Greece during the period 2010-2018 (Eurostat, 2020d), part-time employees were at twice the risk of poverty than full-time employees. In terms of both part-time and full-time employment, the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in Greece was higher than in the EU28 (approximately twice on average). However, while in full-time employment this gap has narrowed in recent years, reaching a percentage difference of 1.9 points in 2018, in part-time employment this does not seem to be the case. During the abovementioned period in Greece the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate in part-time employment, starting from 29.4% in 2010, fluctuated, and after reaching a peak of 30.3% in 2016, showed a gradual decrease to 24.6 % (2018), which can be still considered a worryingly high percentage (Eurostat, 2020d).

5.2 Temporary employment

According to Eurostat (2020r and 2020s), in 2019, out of the total workforce in Greece aged 15-64: 351 thousand people (12.4%) worked with a temporary employment status, 166 thousand men (10.8%) and 185 thousand women (14.2%). During the period 2010-2019, the percentage of temporarily employed young people aged 15-24 reached its highest point in 2013 (33.3%) and then, after a gradual decline until 2018, began to increase, reaching 31.6% in the last four months of 2019. As for the gender gap in temporary employment (Eurostat, 2020g), there no particularly significant percentage differences can be observed (as in part-time employment). In 2019, among 15-24 year-olds, the percentage of men was slightly higher than that of women (by 1.9 percentage points).

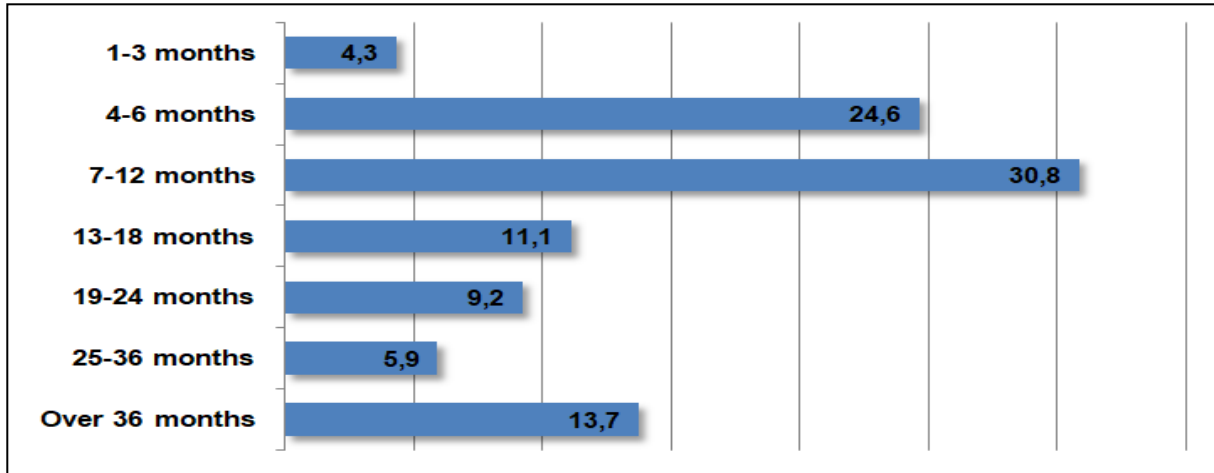


Figure 9: Greece, 2019 - Age group 15-29: Temporary employees by duration of the work contract
 Source: Eurostat, 2020k.

As presented in Figure 9, in 2019, the duration of most temporary employment contracts for young people aged 15-29 in Greece was from 4 to 12 months. More specifically, for a quarter of the contracts the duration was 4-6 months (of which 54.8% concerned women and 45.2% men), while even more, about one third of them, lasted from 7 to 12 months (56.4% for women and 43.6% for men) (Eurostat, 2020k).

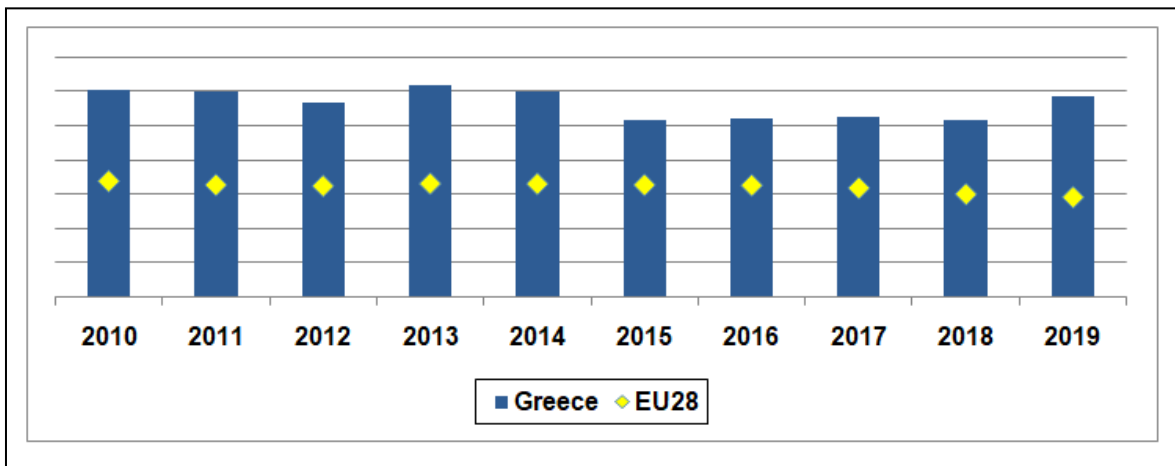


Figure 10: Greece and EU28, 2010-2019 – Age group 15-24: Involuntary temporary employment (% of temporary employment)
 Source: Eurostat, 2020l.

In 2019, out of all young people working on a temporary basis in Greece, more than half (58%) chose to do so because they could not find a full-time job (Eurostat, 2020l). This rate was slightly higher for men (59.1%) in comparison to women (57.8%). The second most common reason reported by them was that they were in education or training (Eurostat, 2020f). As illustrated in Figure 10, the percentages related to involuntary work among young people aged 15-24 were consistently much higher than those of the EU28 (during the period 2010-2019, the average for Greece was 56.4% while for EU28 31.9%) (Eurostat, 2020l).

During the years 2010-2018 in Greece (Eurostat, 2020e), temporarily employed people were at more than double the risk of poverty than permanent workers (on average 13.7% vs. 4.9%). The highest rates regarding in-work at-risk-of-poverty rate, were recorded in 2015 (15.8%) and in 2012 (15.3%) (Eurostat, 2020e). As highlighted in the European Commission's *Joint Employment Report* (2020: 78): "Member States like Greece, Italy, Cyprus, Bulgaria and Spain combine high shares of involuntary part-time and temporary employment, which creates challenges in terms of continuity of employment and job quality".

5.3 On the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on precariousness in Greece. A first Eurofound large-scale survey

On April 9 2020, Eurofound launched a large-scale online survey entitled *Living, working and COVID-19* (Eurofound, 2020b) to examine the wide-ranging consequences on quality of life and work and to capture the impact of the pandemic on the employment status, financial situation and the well-being of people living across the European Union. By April 30, when the field survey was completed, more than 85,000 people (from 18 and older) had participated in it (Eurofound, 2020b). Most of the questions posed to them were based on Eurofound's European Quality of Life Survey (EQLS) and European Working Conditions Survey (EWCS), while other questions were new or based on other sources, such as the EU-SILC of Eurostat (Eurofound, 2020b). The following are some of the first results of the abovementioned survey concerning Greece, for both the 18-50+ and the 18-34 age groups, which are directly or indirectly related to the subject of the current research (as regards the 18-34 age group, due to lack of sufficient data, percentages for some questions are not reported by Eurofound) (Eurofound, 2020b).

Regarding the employment status, the working hours and the job security during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- 4.7% of the survey respondents (aged 18-50+) lost their jobs or their contracts permanently (5.5% of men and 3.5% of women) and 41.8% temporarily (44.7% of men and 38.3% of women). As for the 18-34 age group, 4.1% of them lost their jobs or their contracts permanently and 43.7% temporarily (Eurofound, 2020b).
- 14.7% of the participants considered the possibility of losing their job within the next 3 months very likely (16.7% of men and 12.1% of women) and 8.9% quite likely (9% of men and 8.8% of women) (Eurofound, 2020b).
- 53.5% of the respondents stated that their working hours had been greatly decreased (54.4% of men and 52% of women) and 12.8% that they had been slightly decreased (12.7% of men and 12.9% of women) (Eurofound, 2020b).
- 26% of the surveyed persons started working from home as a result of the pandemic (18.3% of men and 36% of women) (Eurofound, 2020b).
- According to their answers, 17% of them reported that during the crisis period they kept worrying about their work constantly, even in off-work hours (20% of men and 13.2% of women) and 25.2% very often (26.8% of men and 22.9% of women) (Eurofound, 2020b).

Regarding the individuals' financial situation and their living standards during the pandemic:

- Comparing the current financial situation of their household (during the pandemic) to the one existed 3 months ago (before the crisis), 47.4% of the respondents considered that it had worsened (52.8% of men and 42.5% of women), 48.2% that it had remained

the same (43.4% of men and 52.6% of women), and 4.4% that it had improved (3.8% of men and 4.9% of women) (Eurofound 2020b). The corresponding percentages for the 18-34 age group were as follows: 47.4% of them reported their financial situation as worse than before the pandemic, while 48.2% replied that it had been remained the same and 4.4% that it had been improved (Eurofound, 2020b).

- Taking into account the total monthly income of their household, 22.2% of the participants expressed that they could meet their financial obligations with great difficulty (25.1% of men and 19.6% of women) and 23.2% with difficulty (25.1% of men and 21.2% of women) (Eurofound, 2020b). As regards the 18-34 age group, 17.6% of them reported that their households could make ends meet with great difficulty and 21.9% with difficulty (Eurofound, 2020b).
- 34.6% of the participants had not been able to pay utility bills, such as electricity, water and gas, during the last 3 months (38.8% of men and 30.8% of women). The corresponding percentage for the age group 18-34 was 38.1% (Eurofound, 2020b).
- 21% of the surveyed persons were unable to pay their household rent or consumer loans during the last 3 months of the crisis (23.6% of men and 18.5% of women). The corresponding rate for the 18-34 age group was 18.3% (Eurofound, 2020b).

6. CONCLUSIONS-DISCUSSION

The 2007/2008 Global Economic Crisis and the subsequent Recession had a tremendous social cost and a multi-parametric impact on the Labour Market. Inequalities, social vulnerability and precarity have been increased and deepened in many national cases and especially in the south European countries. Further, the impact of the ongoing pandemic at the economies and the Labour market is already visible and extremely alarming. In addition to the back-to-back Crises, mega trends at the global level such as the expansion of the Digital Economy have explicitly affected the Labour markets and seem to trigger severe transformations.

Over the decade 2008-2018 (Eurofound, 2020a) the rates of part-time work in all its types (permanent, fixed-term, self-employed) have increased in most European Union countries (EU28). The gender gap regarding part-time workers was clearly explicit during the last decade (2010-2019) (Eurostat, 2020g). The part-time employment rate of young women aged 15-24 was about two times higher *than the corresponding* rate for men of the same age (Eurostat, 2020g). In most EU28 countries, in 2019 (prior to the pandemic), there was a slight decrease in the rate of involuntary part-time employment, while the three countries with the highest share of persons who worked part-time due to lack of access to full-time employment were Greece, Italy and Cyprus (Eurostat, 2020g). There is clear correlation between precarious work and social vulnerability and even more social exclusion. Part-time workers in the EU28 were at twice the risk of poverty, in 2018, than those employed full-time (Eurostat, 2020d).

In all EU28 countries, the proportion of employees in temporary employment recorded in 2019 was much higher for young people (Eurostat, 2020g). During the current decade, the risk of poverty in temporary employment has increased considerably in the majority of EU28 countries. In 2018, the risk of falling into poverty was almost three times greater for employees with temporary jobs than for those with permanent jobs (Eurostat, 2020p).

As far as Greece is concerned, it should be mentioned that (with regard to the 15-24 age group), Greece was the EU Member State with the highest youth unemployment rate in all the recent years (Eurostat, 2020m). Further, during the current decade, in Greece, part-time employment rate for workers aged 15-29 rose significantly: 30% for the age group 15-24, namely a percentage more than three times higher than that of part-time workers aged 25-64 (Eurostat, 2020h). Additionally, throughout the period 2010-2019, the proportion of women working part-time not only was *substantially* higher, but also increased more than that of men (Eurostat, 2020h). There is a strong correlation between educational level and part-time employment, especially for medium-skilled and high-skilled workers (Eurostat, 2020a). In the private sector, an over-representation of precarious forms of employment has been recorder over the latest years, as recruitments of part-time employees have been significantly increased, while the main reason for choosing a part-time or temporary job, was young people's limited (or no) chances to find a full-time job (Hellenic Statistical Authority, 2020). During the current decade, part-time employees were at twice the risk of monetary poverty than full-time employees (Eurostat, 2020d). In addition, the in-work at-risk-of-poverty rates of part-time workers were about two times higher compared to those recorded in the EU28 (Eurostat, 2020d). The share of temporary employees aged 15-24 was about three times higher than those of the 25-54 and 55-64 age groups (Eurostat, 2020g). This has further increased the social vulnerability among youth, since (in Greece), temporary workers were constantly at more than double the risk of poverty than permanent workers (2010-2018- see Eurostat, 2020e).

The persistent high youth unemployment rates, the growing share of precarious work and its "normalization" within the labour markets in EU, the skills mismatch, the broader modifications in the labour market raise several challenges that among others concern the skills-set required to adapt in the changing labour market and improve the life-chances in a gradually uncertain context. It's more than evident, that in Greece (as in the EU) precarious employment primarily concerns the *youth* age group, while the gender gap in part-time employment is severe (especially among young people). Precarious work is not actually an option in Greece, since the main reason for choosing a part-time job, mainly among youth, was the lack of any actual alternative (i.e. full-time permanent job). The situation regarding precarious work in Greece, a country heavily affected by the 2008 Economic Crisis, as well as in several other EU countries would probably worsen (as already mentioned) due to the tremendous impact of the pandemic crisis on the economy and the labour market. Additionally we have to keep in mind that young people would probably far more been affected (given that precarious work mainly concerns young people), while there is strong correlation between precariousness and risk-of-poverty. It should be noted at this point that, according to Manolchev, Saundry and Lewis: "although the levels of insecurity may vary across different precarious groups, insecurity and uncertainty are likely to be shared by many and familiar to all. These experiences have led to precarious workers' gradual collectivisation into a class of insecurity-sharing denizens who are an Other to the State (Standing, 2011; Savage et al., 2013)..." (Manolchev, Saundry, & Lewis, 2018: 9-10).

Clearly the combination of social vulnerability and precariousness affects all the key determinants of young people's life course and further results in both an individualized multi-level withdrawal (Papadakis, Kyridis, Papargyris, 2015: 67 and Papadakis, N., Drakaki, M., Kyridis, A., Papargyris, 2017b), and a broader institutional disengagement, transformed into a vicious circle of degradation, that could substantially threaten the social cohesion in Greece.

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