Youth policy in austerity Europe: the case of Greece

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This article addresses young people’s declining power in the Greek labour market due to the implementation of sweeping austerity policies and the consequent expansion of youth precarious employment and unemployment since the first bailout agreement in 2010. The analysis concludes that the crisis has acted as a catalyst for worsening of the employment situation of young people. Nevertheless, the social and employment disadvantage for youth has strong historical roots and it can be only partially explained by the crisis, as long before the crisis precarious forms of employment and unemployment rates were already higher than the adult levels. Finally, the article concludes that precarious youth employment and high youth unemployment levels are two sides of the same coin of poverty and social exclusion risk.

Keywords: Greece; austerity; crisis; precarious work; unemployment

1. Introduction

The unfortunate pioneering role of Greece in the course of the current economic crisis has made the country an international point of reference and analysis. Shock economic therapies implemented after May 2010, when Greece became recipient of a financial bailout package, had serious social consequences (Kretsos, 2012a). Financial support from the Troika¹ and especially the IMF has been conditional on reductions in public deficits and public spending, thus initiating a drastic reform of labour market and welfare state (Hall, 2011). In a similar vein, the analysis of Meardi (2012) indicates that changes in industrial relations systems in Greece (and other suffered countries who became recipients of financial bailout packages) are systemic and tremendous.² Young workers are, among other social groups, heavily affected by the drastic labour market deregulation and austerity policies that were gradually implemented in Europe after 2008 (European Commission, 2013). During the crisis, unemployment levels among young workers remained significantly higher than the rest of the working population and they have risen faster than for other age groups in most EU countries. This development reinforced pre-existing labour market inequalities at the expense of youth, especially in Greece where unemployment among young workers has hit more than 50% (Kretsos, 2012b). To some extent, this development has emerged as a consequence of structural aspects of the labour markets and certain employers’ behaviours in response to economic difficulties (Simms, 2011). Young people, defined for the purpose of this study as people between the ages of 16 and 30 years, traditionally face more difficulties than older workers in getting an entry into the labour market and in finding stable and well-paid jobs.³

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Precarious employment could be defined as employment characterised by the absence of security elements associated with the typical full-time, permanent employment that was considered as a major historical achievement of trade unions in the post-war period. Precarious employment is also closely associated with the absence of other features of good work and is associated with similar concepts such as ‘insecure work’ (Heery & Salmon, 2000) and ‘vulnerability at work’ (Pollert & Charlwood, 2008). Despite the urgency of defining effective employment policies, the precarious social and economic position of young workers is likely to be exacerbated in the future given the character of recent employment policy initiatives especially in Greece and other countries of Southern Europe and Ireland that all face increasing pressure from the economic crisis.

The aim of this article was first to explore the strong roots of young precarious employment in Greece and to highlight the impact of austerity policies on young people’s vulnerability in the labour market. It is argued that the social and employment disadvantage of the youth should be conceptualised not only as a consequence of the current crisis, despite the dramatic rise of youth unemployment and youth precarious employment rates after 2008, but also as part of the historical interplay between social, cultural and economic forces with opposing interests regarding the future regulatory outcomes. This interplay of social and economic forces in Greece involves not only a set of different agencies of interests, such as militant employer groups, right wing think tanks, the media, successive governments and organised labour, but also other structural factors in the Greek economic and employment system. Such factors include the informal economy and the familialistic style in the provision of welfare (Karamessini, 2008). However, this interplay of the above forces and structural factors has been put into strain with the current crisis deepening further the social and economic inequalities at the expense of younger workers and especially those young workers with non-standard contracts.

In order to address these issues, the article is organised into four further sections. Section 2 summarises the explanations that have been advanced in the international literature regarding the phenomenon of precarious employment among young workers and the difficulties in drawing international comparisons. Section 3 discusses the labour market deregulation dynamics in Greece with an emphasis on young workers. The underlying argument of this section is that the labour market situation of young people has worsened in the last three decades. Section 4 examines the repercussions of the crisis in the labour market position of young workforce. As it is argued, the crisis has acted as a catalyst for significant changes in the economy and the nature of work that make young people more insecure, precarious and likely to end up worse off than their parents. Finally, Section 5 provides conclusions.

2. Comparing and defining national examples of youth precarious employment

A growing literature has been developed on how and why job insecurity and low pay has spread throughout the last 20 years, affecting a widening spectrum of young workers including young skilled professional workers. Work insecurity is promoted by the expansion of flexible forms of employment and the deregulation of industrial relations, such as part-time and temporary employment involuntary in the majority of cases, pseudo self-employment contracts, subsidised job placements, undeclared work, low earnings for the current level of living, employment in sectors and organisations with high probabilities of bankruptcy or high levels of dismissals and insufficient coverage in the case of someone being unemployed. For example, examining the case of the US labour market, Sweet and
Meiksins (2008) have noted that the spread of job insecurity has occurred because of the decline of older, more secure types of work, the changing strategies for organising work and the changing composition of the labour force.

Other scholars suggest that the spread of work insecurity is the result of employer strategies to restore the low profit rates after the oil crisis of the 1970s. This formula was heavily about the reduction of employees’ real wages through several strategies, including direct cuts of wages (and benefits), the shift towards ‘contingent’ jobs (such as part-time jobs and temporary jobs) and ‘two-tier’ wage systems (in which new employees are hired at much lower starting wages compared with existing employees) (Brenner, 1998; Callinicos, 2003; Dumenil & Levy, 2002; Moseley, 1999; Shaikh, 1999). In a similar vein, Kretsos (2010) has argued that young workers and new entrants in the labour market are among the most heavily affected social groups of this income inequality and wage-squeezing process.

The restructuring of employment relations and the decrease in real wages have created, among others, a deep generational gap in the allocation of income and the allocation of secure jobs in the economy. In all European countries, young people appear to have a higher inclination than the rest of the population to such types of contingent or precarious employment (Biletta & Eisner, 2007). There are, though, national variations in the extent of precarious employment across Europe, and this trend of diverging convergence is reflected in the social and economic situation of youth after the outbreak of the 2008 crisis (European Commission, 2013). In essence, common traits but also national paths to the labour market marginalisation of young people are observed.

Nevertheless, such paths, trends and paradigms of young workers’ precariousness are hard to compare, as the characteristics that determine insecure employment vary among countries, age groups and sectors of economic activity, making difficult a specific definition that takes into account all different aspects of youth precarious employment. There is high ambiguity regarding the definition of work and pay disadvantage observed in European youth labour markets (Kretsos & Livanos, 2012). Indicative of this trend is that there is still no universally accepted definition. Almost all monographs and comparative research analysis on precarious employment highlight the dominance of debates that usually reflect and highlight various issues of national interest (Anderson & Rogaly, 2005; Barbier, Brygoo, & Viguier, 2002; Broughton, Biletta, & Kullander, 2010; Fudge & Owens, 2006; Kretsos, 2011a, 2011b; McKay, Jefferys, Paraksevopoulou, & Keles, 2012; Polavieja, 2005).

Nevertheless, the concept of (youth) precarious employment is wider and more dynamic than other relevant concepts (e.g. insecure work, contingent employment, flexible and non-standard work) as it captures changes taking place in employment systems and work organisation. In particular, precarious employment is understood here as a functional conceptual device that describes, better than any other relevant term, the global transformations at work and the modern youth labour market inequalities (Vosko, MacDonald, & Campbell, 2009). In this context, the present study aims to explore the historical roots of youth precarious employment in Greece by examining first the period between 1980 and 2007 and, second, the period after 2008 when the upsurge of the economic crisis made the situation tougher for many young workers.

3. Precarious youth employment in Greece before the crisis (1980–2007)

The employment disadvantage of youth in Greece either in terms of higher than the rest working groups unemployment rates or in terms of greater levels of precarious
employment is not something new. As Biletta and Eisner (2007) have suggested, youth unemployment in Greece does not warrant priority attention among political parties. Nevertheless, the situation is somehow more complex, as approaches to integration in labour markets, social transfers and public policy have a direct effect on young people in their transition to adult life and in their interaction with their surroundings (Minguez, Peláez, & Sánchez-Cabezudo, 2012). As other scholars have argued, Southern European countries including Greece are characterised by familism in the provision and distribution of welfare (Esping-Andersen, 1990; Karamessini, 2008; Kretsos, 2011a; Saraceno, 1994). This condition of having family as the main cornerstone of social solidarity results in safeguarding the earnings and career stability of the male breadwinners. Otherwise, social cohesion is put at risk, the intergenerational solidarity links are broken and young workers are left on their own in an ocean of insecurity and poverty, as either state support or decent job opportunities are limited in the Southern Europe context. 4

In this context, the protective role played by families and other informal supportive networks is significant in Greece that even before the crisis was characterised by a strong tradition of an inadequate welfare state and low social transfers (Guillén & Matsaganis, 2000). Not surprisingly, young workers used to cope with and address risks and economic stressors, such as low pay, job insecurity, job loss and underemployment by mobilising their own family and social networks.

Typical examples include the cases of unemployed university graduates supported by their families, the creation of many small family businesses funded by members of the family, relatives or friends, and the support to get a job through informal personal and family networks. In a similar vein and as Sabbatini (2008) has commented on Italy, ‘it’s not what you know, but who you know.’ This common aphorism summarised much of the conventional wisdom regarding social capital and comes out from widespread sense that close competition for jobs and contracts generally require the ‘right contracts’ in the ‘right places’. As relevant studies have indicated, social networks and family support are considered more significant in alleviating young graduates from the sorrow of unemployment or the pain caused by low pay and work insecurity in Southern Europe (Gentile, 2011).

Nevertheless, the success of familialistic welfare frames and strong social networks is debateable. Even before the financial and economic crisis of 2008, there was increasing concern that young people around the European Union were struggling to make transitions into good quality work. Even before the upsurge of the current crisis, unemployment and precarious jobs were the most common options young people had in their early transitions from school to work and their latter steps in the labour market. And even before the outbreak of the current crisis, the Greek youth labour market was characterised by high Not in Education, Employment and Training rates, as well as extensive symptoms of labour law violation, widespread use of precarious and sometimes illegal work arrangements for young people (Kretsos, 2011a).

There were strong indications of the failure of family networks and labour market institutions to provide decent job opportunities for the majority of young people. For example, according to the outcomes of Euro-Barometer and European Working Conditions Surveys before 2010, Greek young people were the least optimistic about their future and they enjoyed the lowest levels of job satisfaction across Europe. 5 In a similar vein, there were signs of higher preference of left-wing parties by young people in the national elections of 2008 (especially among young people living in the urban cities). Finally, and most important, several massive demonstrations against policy reforms in education took place before the economic crisis upsrise in 2010. 6
Greece entered economic crisis in 2010 having already many young people detached from mainstream political parties and social institutions. These discontent, anger and mistrust were definitely related to the precarious position of young people in the Greek labour market. In 2008, almost one year before the outbreak of the current crisis and the implementation of sweeping austerity measures, youth unemployment level was double than the national average. Furthermore, young workers represented 40% and 27% of the temporary and part-time employees, respectively, while young people participated on a much higher level in the lowest wage deciles (net monthly income up to 750€) and to a much lower level in the most well paid (net monthly income more than 1000€ and net income between 1000€ and 1251€) (Κρητικός, 2008). Furthermore, according to data from OECD, flexible and contingent in nature forms of employment among young workers have shown a dramatic rise over the years despite their involuntary character, while their percentage was lower among older employees (Kretsos, 2010).

Furthermore, false self-employment or dependent self-employment, that is employment usually characterised as a ‘grey zone’ between dependent and independent employment, as far as concerns social security, dismissal and other employment rules, was quite significant and widespread. The respective figure of false self-employment for the age groups between 16 and 34 years was as high as 16% in 2007 (GSEE, 2008). Finally, an important aspect of young people’s vulnerability at work was related to their earning, as the level of income has a tremendous impact on the security people feel with their job. Looking at relevant data from the Structure of Earnings Survey, significant differences between the average earnings for all employees to those of young workers (15–29 years old) are to be found. Young workers in Greece not only received lower wages than their rest EU15 counterparts, but also had dramatic differences with the rest of the population of their country.

To summarise, precariousness among young people was a trademark of the Greek labour market and despite various experimentations in social and economic policy and the existence of informal social and family networks of support, it has never been eradicated in spite of periods of economic growth in the last decades. As discussed next, this difficult situation has exacerbated after the economic crisis in 2008 and the implementation of austerity policies that drastically reduced family incomes and declined the available job opportunities especially for young people.

4. Precarious youth employment in Greece with the outbreak of the crisis (2008–2010)

Many European countries have long before the outbreak of the crisis implemented neoliberal youth employment policies mainly oriented towards the flexibilisation of the young labour markets. Indicative measures of this trend include the relaxation of the Employment protection legislation, the reduction of the benefit period for young people, the implementation of means-tested social benefits and the introduction of welfare-to-work programmes (Mizen, 2003). In addition to those institutional and policy failures to deal with high unemployment and precarious employment levels, young people have been punished severely by the economic crisis of 2008. For example, the International Labour Organisation report (International Labour Office, 2010) and the Joint ILO-IMF Conference, held in Oslo in September 2010, stressed that the crisis and the consequent mass unemployment have affected the youth population seriously. In a similar vein, European Commission (2013) argued that the biggest victims of the current economic crisis are young people and especially those aged 18–24 years. Not surprisingly, the scale of youth worklessness is leading to concerns that a 'lost generation' is being generated.
This is the case for Greece, due to its unfortunate pioneering role in the current crisis. Under the threat of national economic bankruptcy and collapse (as well as the specific control rules of Troika on bailing out Greece twice since 2010), the policy and collective bargaining emphasis has been on drastically reducing public spending, dismantling labour law and social security systems and saddling people with insecure jobs. In this framework, the main youth employment policy initiatives taken by governments ruling Greece as a response to the crisis resulted in significant wage cuts and the introduction of lower minimum income scales. Young precarious workers were also affected by the easing of employers’ dismissals by reducing compensation payments and relaxing justifications required of employers when making redundancies.\textsuperscript{13}

Such policy and collective bargaining measures have resulted in transferring the burden of the economic crisis onto workers, and especially onto young people, through the widespread use of cheaper, more atypical and temporary contracts,\textsuperscript{14} leading to the gradual expansion of a new underclass of low-paid, precarious and more insecure youth. The ocean of labour market deregulation became much evident with the report issued by the Labour Inspectorate (SEPE).\textsuperscript{15} According to that, during the first four months of 2012, 46\% of new contracts in the private sector were for flexible forms of work such as part-time work and work rotation.\textsuperscript{16} Compared with the first four months of 2011, the conversion of full-time employment contracts to flexible forms of employment increased by 47\%, with 4909 employment contracts switching to part-time employment. About 7\% (or 513 cases) of work contracts changed to work rotation schemes with the agreement of the employee, while 169\% (or 3328) were imposed unilaterally by the employer (Stamati, 2012).

Furthermore, most of those losing their employment during the crisis have been young people under 29 years of age. For example, 7 out of 10 workers who lost their jobs between 2009 and 2010 were young men, while 4 out of 10 workers who lost their jobs two years later were young people up to 29 years of age (Stamati, 2012). In absolute terms, 333,733 young people aged 15–29 years lost their jobs in 2012.\textsuperscript{17} Furthermore, 6 out of 10 young workers who lost their job were mostly male young workers (Stamati, 2012). After almost six years of stark economic recession, unemployment and youth unemployment, respectively, reached levels as high as 26.8\% and 56.6\% (of which female youth unemployment is 62.1\%).\textsuperscript{18} The precarious social and economic position of young workers in Greece is likely to be exacerbated in the future if we take into account other developments in the area of employment policy.\textsuperscript{19}

More specifically, the main policy response to the crisis by the successive governments since 2009 was the enactment of a special employment regime for young people.\textsuperscript{20} This regime is characterised by lower wages for young workers\textsuperscript{21} and significant cuts to unemployment benefits by about 25\% even for seasonal workers. In an effort to support young workers who are unemployed, the Manpower Employment Organization (OAED) announced a new scheme for the ‘acquisition of work experience’. OAED grants a subsidy corresponding to 100\% of the employers and employees social security contributions, whereas employers pay a wage corresponding to 80\% of the minimum monthly wage or day wage. The work experience programme aims to provide employment for 10,000 16–24-year-olds unemployed persons. Nevertheless, the scheme is problematic, as it is addressed only to private-sector enterprises. It further has a specified duration (6–12 months) and only those aged 16–24 years are eligible to join.\textsuperscript{22}

The problematic position of young workers in the labour market has serious social consequences such as delay in gaining economic independence, late formation of families and a strong fall in fertility rates, with its crucial consequences for both society and
sustainability of the welfare state. To summarise, as we saw in the previous part of the article, the issue of precarious employment among young workers in Greece has strong roots and it is a structural problem. However, the economic crisis has significantly aggravated the situation of all workforce groups and especially young people. There are two mechanisms through which the policies put forward after the economic crisis leads to changes in young people’s employment prospects: the first is the rise in unemployment rate and the second is the increased rates of precarious employment. Both mechanisms result in making young labour cheaper and more dispensable to employers. At the same time, the framework of eliminating the welfare state and social protection standards results in further weakening of the capability of young workers to cope with the economic stressors of job insecurity, low pay, unemployment and under-employment.

5. Discussion

Young workers in Greece cannot be considered as temporarily ‘outsiders’ of the labour market due to the recent crisis that hit the country. The majority of young people in Greece are trapped in persistent unemployment or low-paid contingent jobs located at the periphery of the labour market with limited and not idyllic prospects for upward social mobility. This condition used to be the case since early 1980s, even if the crisis has acted as a catalyst for deteriorating further the working and living conditions of young people. Work precariousness and high unemployment among young people still remain the trademark of the Greek labour market posing serious risks in young people’s lives and emancipation process. The ongoing crisis and the strategic choices made by the Greek government and the Troika feeds further the beast of high and persistent youth unemployment and youth precarious employment. The available statistical data are alarming, even if official statistics use limited tools to define precarious employment and they have very elastic definitions of unemployment.

Young people in Greece are exposed to uncertainty in unprecedented levels, as the institutional settings and the family and social structures that used to provide safety from the risk of unemployment and other stressors have severely weakened due to drastic labour market and welfare state reforms. Austerity policies make unsustainable previous models of intergenerational solidarity because they reduce young people’s access to economic resources (e.g. squeezed family income and fewer job opportunities) and social transfers (e.g. welfare state decline).

In this context, serious issues and questions emerge regarding the future agenda of youth policy: what intergenerational and intragenerational inequalities are about to come? How austerity politics in Europe will further affect the level and types of social and economic risks for young people? What sort of social resistance and welfare state mechanisms can provide greater protection to young workers in the era of severe austerity policies? What sort of political representation can provide greater voice to young people? And finally, can existing institutions across Europe cope with the massive scale changes emerging from austerity politics? The Greek case indicates that austerity policies do not work for young people. It further tells us that historical legacies and traditions still matter in the way common problems across European societies, such as youth unemployment and precarious employment, are defined and perceived. And finally, it shows us that forced deregulation and structural reforms have their limits and risks. Young people frustrated by austerity have expanded social unrest and public anger at the mainstream political institutions. The numerous protests that have taken place since 2010, the impressive actions of the Greek Indignados Occupy Movement in 2011 and the meteoric rise of
SYRIZA (radical left party) in the general elections of 2012 are simply parts of an ongoing youth revolt and resistance to neoliberalism that may bring about or inspire more radical political and institutional changes.

Notes
1. Troika is the acronym for the financial lenders of European troubled economies in the European Union 15. Troika is composed of the European Commission (EC) on behalf of European Union, the European Central Bank (ECB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
2. In January 2012, Poland increased the minimum wage by 8.2%, to 1500 zlotys (€357), while one month later minimum wage in Greece was reduced by 20% to €586, and by 32% for people under the age of 25 years, to €510. As a consequence, the minimum wage (calculated at Purchasing Power Standards), for people younger than 25 years, became, for the first time, higher in new EU-member Poland than in old EU-member Greece. As Meardi (2012) notes that, in 2012, the Polish minimum wage has also overtaken the Portuguese minimum wage.
3. Despite young people have higher, in comparison to older employees, level of educational attainment. As the second edition of the Employment and Social Developments in Europe Review (European Commission, 2013) accepts [T]he young tend to be more often overqualified than other age groups... The overqualification of young in the Mediterranean countries, known for their labour market segmentation and high unemployment rates, has risen much more sharply than in other countries in the last decade.
4. This is exactly what is happening currently in Greece and other Mediterranean EU member-states. The squeeze of family income due to austerity policies and economic recession effects has made the previous model of intergenerational solidarity unsustainable and fragile. Demonstrations and violent confrontations between police and (mainly) young people across those countries have become endemic since 2010. The Indignados/Αγανακτημένοι (Outraged) Movement in Spain and Greece who occupied Puerta del Sol in Madrid and Syntagma Square in Athens demanded real and direct democracy and have been considered as one of the most successful workers’ mobilisations since the restoration of democracy in 1975. See, for example, the analysis by Mason (2012).
5. It should be mentioned though that the above conclusions do not take into account any age breakdown as we do not have such an analysis at the moment. Nevertheless, there is no reason to assume that young people will appear happier about their work and more optimistic about the future taking into account that they continue to form one of the most disadvantaged groups of the workforce.
6. Special attention should be paid on the violent riots in the city centre of Athens (and other urban areas) in 2008 when a policeman killed the young student Alexis Grigoropoulos.
7. For example, according to an earlier study by Pascual and Waddington (2000), in Greece, 70.1% of young people expressed no trust in mainstream trade unions compared with only 22.9% who did not trust the army and 40.6% who did not trust the judiciary system.
8. With the exception of the rate of temporary employment that was no higher than those observed in other EU countries and the EU15 average level (see Appendix). Nevertheless, involuntary temporary employment is much greater than the average level of EU15 indicating a stronger desire of young people in Greece for permanent employment than in other countries. This development may in turn be related to the lower, in relation to international comparisons, levels of unemployment benefits across the OECD area (Kretsos, 2011a).
9. In general, the risk of youth poverty in the countries of European South, including Greece, becomes more serious due to underdeveloped labour market policies, the low level of social transfers and the pronounced labour market segmentations. For example, monthly earnings in those countries vary between 50% and 86% of the EU15 average. At the same time, the respective figures for the monthly earnings of young employees are much lower and vary between 39% and 66% for young employees.
10. It is worth mentioning that between 1994 and 2008, Greece had the highest (after Ireland) rates of economic growth across the EU. See the analysis by Ioakeimoglou and Milios (2005) and Ioakimoglou (2011).
11. This development was consistent with what Greer and Doellgast (2013) consider as marketisation; a wide range of phenomena, such as outsourcing, privatisation, active labour
market policies, and the international integration of markets for goods, services, capital and labour, that lead to increasing economic and social inequality.

12. Emerging evidence in many countries across Europe suggests that this younger generation will be the first to experience a decline in living standards compared with that of their parents. See, for example, the study by Ainley and Allen (2010) for the dynamics and mechanisms of this trend in Britain.

13. According to a recent study by Koutentakis (2012), the reduction in the cost of firing resulted in rapid unemployment rise.

14. The analysis by Stamati (2012) is quite informative on those developments.

15. See also the analysis in the study on Precarious Work and Social Rights coordinated by McKay et al. (2012); the social meaning attached to precarious employment has been expanded, and it now includes not only young people, but also public-sector workers, workers close to retirement age, construction industry workers and high educated workers.

16. See Lampousaki (2011) and http://www.tovima.gr/finance/article/?aid=462019. See also http://tvxs.gr/news/ellada/sepe-kakos-ergodotis-sxedon-1-stoys-3.

17. In percentage terms, this reduction corresponds to 39.2% in the youth employment level. See the analysis by Stamati (2012).

18. Prolonged economic recession has been accompanied by an increase in youth unemployment. Youth unemployment in Greece is the highest in Europe. In October 2012, the respective rate for those aged 15–24 years rose to 56.6% (22.1% in 2008), while for people aged 25–34 years the unemployment rate rose to 34.1% (10.6% in 2008). See Table A6 in Appendix for more details on the rising trends of youth unemployment between 2007 and 2012.

19. Besides, one of the first measures taken by the new socialist government in October 2009 was to terminate the work-placement contracts of about 50,000 young workers (stagiaires) in the public sector (Kretsos, 2011a, 2011b).

20. The Greek Trade Unions Congress criticised the government for this initiative and made a formal complaint to International Labour Office (ILO) in the sense that the deregulation of the existing minimum protective legislative framework, in conjunction with the absence of adequate guarantees and deficient inspection mechanisms, may ‘lead to multiple harmful side effects for young workers’ especially in the absence of active labour market policies. See respectively the ILO report (ILO, 2011, p. 334).

21. The law provides for a reduction of the minimum wage paid to workers under 25 years of age to 84% of the minimum wage and to minors of 15–18 years of age to 70% of the minimum wage.

22. In January 2013, the government announced a national action plan to combat youth unemployment and to promote youth entrepreneurship. The new plan aims to benefit 350,000 young people aged 15–24 and 25–35 years with a total budget of 600 million euros. The plan has not been put into practice yet at the time of the writing.

23. Furthermore, almost all economic forecasts indicate further rise of youth unemployment.

24. For example, according to Eurostat, employed persons are persons who during the reference week performed work, even for just one hour a week, for pay, profit or family gain.

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Table A1. Demographic characteristics of young people (aged 15–29 years), 1980–2007.

|          | Population | Labour force | Employment | Unemployment |
|----------|------------|--------------|------------|--------------|
|          | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1980–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1980–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1980–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1980–2007) |
| EU15     | 27.31      | −22.49       | 22.83      | −29.81       | 21.64      | −24.54       | 38.58      | −36.33       |
| Greece   | 27.30      | −11.84       | 21.06      | −17.45       | 19.02      | −16.14       | 27.30      | −11.84       |

Source: Kretsos (2010).
Table A2. Part-time employment for selected age groups, 1987–2007.

| Age group | EU15 | Greece |
|-----------|------|--------|
|           | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) |
| Total     | 18.14 | 39.25 | 7.82 | 19.87 |
| 15–19     | 42.79 | 149.07 | 15.79 | 110.72 |
| 20–24     | 19.97 | 137.49 | 10.31 | 42.80 |
| 25–29     | 13.38 | 38.60 | 7.32 | −2.67 |
| 30–34     | 14.16 | 14.91 | 6.73 | −7.52 |

Source: Kretsos (2010).

Table A3. Percentage of involuntary part-time employment by age group (2007).

| Age group | EU15 | Greece |
|-----------|------|--------|
|           | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) |
| Total     | 21.0 | 42.8 |
| 15–24     | 23.6 | 44.7 |
| 15–39     | 23.9 | 51.5 |

Source: Kretsos (2010).

Table A4. Temporary employment for selected age groups.

| Age group | EU15 | Greece |
|-----------|------|--------|
|           | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) |
| Total     | 14.80 | 28.70 | 10.90 | −34.34 |
| 15–24     | 42.80 | 32.51 | 27.00 | −10.89 |
| 15–39     | 22.00 | 37.50 | 14.20 | −19.77 |

Source: Kretsos (2010).

Table A5. Percentage of involuntary temporary employment by age group (2007).

| Age group | EU15 | Greece |
|-----------|------|--------|
|           | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) | Share in 2007 (%) | % Change (1987–2007) |
| Total     | 57.4 | 82.5 |
| 15–24     | 33.6 | 62.9 |
| 15–39     | 52.3 | 79.1 |

Source: Kretsos (2010).

Table A6. Unemployment rate by age group, 2007–2012.

| Age group | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|-----------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| 15–24     | 22.9 | 22.1 | 28.5 | 34.7 | 46.7 | 56.6 |
| 25–34     | 11.6 | 10.6 | 13.0 | 18.9 | 27.0 | 34.1 |
| 35–44     | 6.3  | 6.1  | 8.3  | 11.6 | 15.9 | 23.3 |
| 45–54     | 4.5  | 4.5  | 6.9  | 9.3  | 14.1 | 19.5 |
| 55–64     | 3.1  | 3.1  | 4.9  | 6.8  | 9.0  | 15.4 |
| 65–74     | 1.4  | 0.8  | 1.0  | 1.9  | 3.6  | 4.9  |
| Total     | 8.1  | 7.5  | 10.0 | 13.8 | 19.7 | 26.8 |