



COUNTRY REPORT  
**HUNGARY**

*SZGTI*

**Szakszervezetek Gazdasági és Társadalomkutatási  
Intézete Alapítvány**

Szakszervezetek Gazdaság és Társadalomkutatási Intézete Alapítvány  
Economic and Social Research  
Institute of Trade Unions Foundation – SZGTI  
Budapest, Hungary

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## Introduction

The empirical research embraced all the six Hungarian trade union confederations (of which merger of three ones is underway), as well as three sectoral federations (chemical, railway, commerce unions) and two company unions (postal service, electricity.) Interviews were made with the leaders of youth organisations of the unions by Szilvia Borbély and László Neumann, altogether nine interviews due to personal overlaps. All interviewee considered people under 35 youth, except for a public sector union mentioning 40 as age limit.

The interviewed persons at national and sectoral organisations were the followings:

László Kovács, Alliance of Autonomous Trade Unions ([Autonóm Szakszervezetek Szövetsége, ASZSZ](#));

Péter Dorogi, Confederation of Unions of Professionals ([Értelmiségi Szakszervezeti Tömörülés, ÉSZT](#));

Dr. Veronika Szilágyi Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions ([Független Szakszervezetek Demokratikus Ligája, LIGA](#))

Imre Szabó, National Federation of Workers' Councils ([Munkástanácsok Országos Szövetsége, MOSZ](#));

Szilárd Széles, National Association of Hungarian Trade Unions ([Magyar Szakszervezetek Országos Szövetsége, MSZOSZ](#));

Nagy Viktória, Trade Unions' Cooperation Forum ([Szakszervezetek Együttműködési Fóruma, SZEFE](#));

Kiss Nikoletta, Trade Union of Commercial Employees ([Kereskedelmi Alkalmazottak Szakszervezete, KASZ](#));

László Kovács, Federation of Trade Unions of the Chemical, Energy and Allied Workers ([Magyar Vegyipari Energiaipari és Rokon Szakmákban Dolgozók Szakszervezeti Szövetsége, VDSZ](#));

Szilárd Széles, Trade Union of Hungarian Railwaymen ([Vasutasok Szakszervezete, VSZ](#));

Zoltán Kneidl, United Electricity Industry Union Federation

(Egyesült Villamosenergia-ipari Dolgozók Szakszervezeti Szövetsége, [EVDSZ](#));

Andrea Spander, Postal Union (Postás Szakszervezet, [PSZ](#)).

Interviewees were also below 35, usually this is the age limit for resigning leaders of union sections to replace them by successors. Interviews were conducted in April 2014, at various venues: office, home or public place.

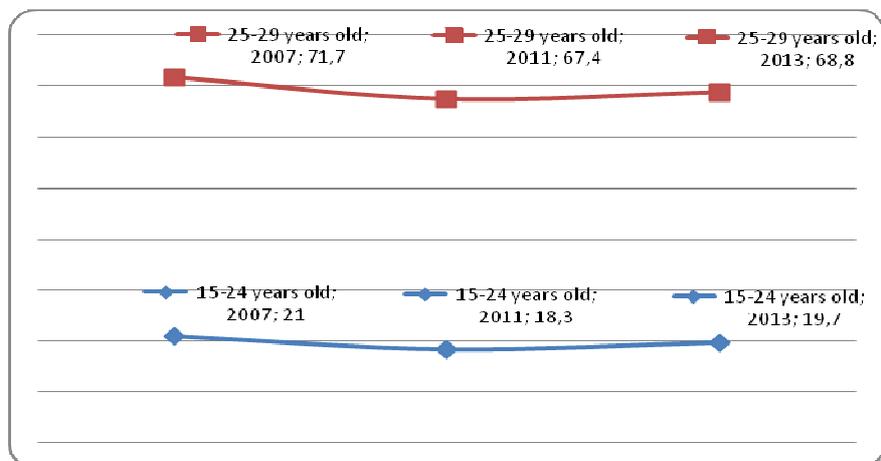
## 1. Labour market position of young people

At present the young people in Hungary, after finishing school, enter a labour market which is characterised by low employment rate, structural constraints and territorial inequalities. Their chances differ significantly according to their family background, education level and geographical location, etc.

During the last decades the young labour force in the active population in Hungary has significantly decreased. According to the data of the latest census, the 28% of the total labour force supply (15-64 years) was 15–29 years old, that is 1 000 880 persons. It means 370 000 persons less than in 1998. ((2010 data, KSH, 2011 October). The longer student life caused significant decrease in the activity rate. Between 1998 and 2010 the activity rate of 15-19 years old from 15% decreased to 3,7%, the activity rate of the 20-24 years old from 60,6% to 44,8%, meanwhile the activity rate of 25-29 years old increased from 72,8% to 77,2%. (KSH, 2011 October).

Hungary has one of the lowest employment rates in the EU (in 2013 for persons aged 15-64 it was 59%, EU-28 64%) and it is even more accentuated in the case of youth. The employment rate in 2013 for persons aged 15-24 was 19,7% (in case of EU27 it was 32,6%) and for persons aged 25-29 was 68,8% (in case of EU 27 it was 71,9%). The employment rate reached its bottom in 2011.

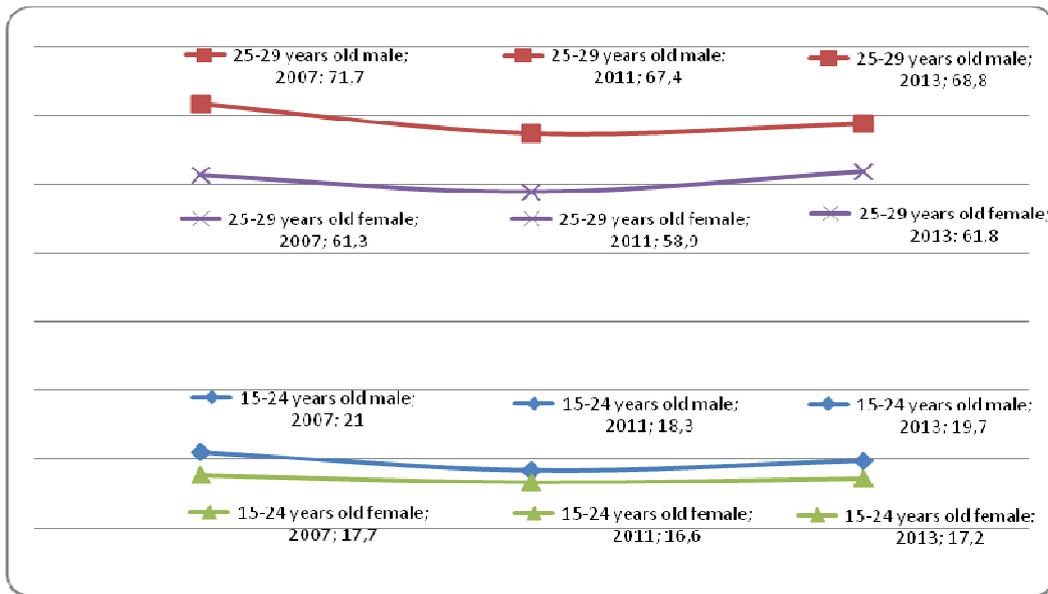
Figure 1 – Employment rate, Hungary, 15-24 and 25-29 years old, 2007, 2011 and 2013, in %



Source: Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>, 27.05.2014

The female employment rate has been slightly lower than the male employment rate for persons aged 15-24 (19,7% for boys and 17,2% for girls, 2013). This gap is much wider in case of persons aged 25-29 (61,8% or women and 68,8% for men, 2013).

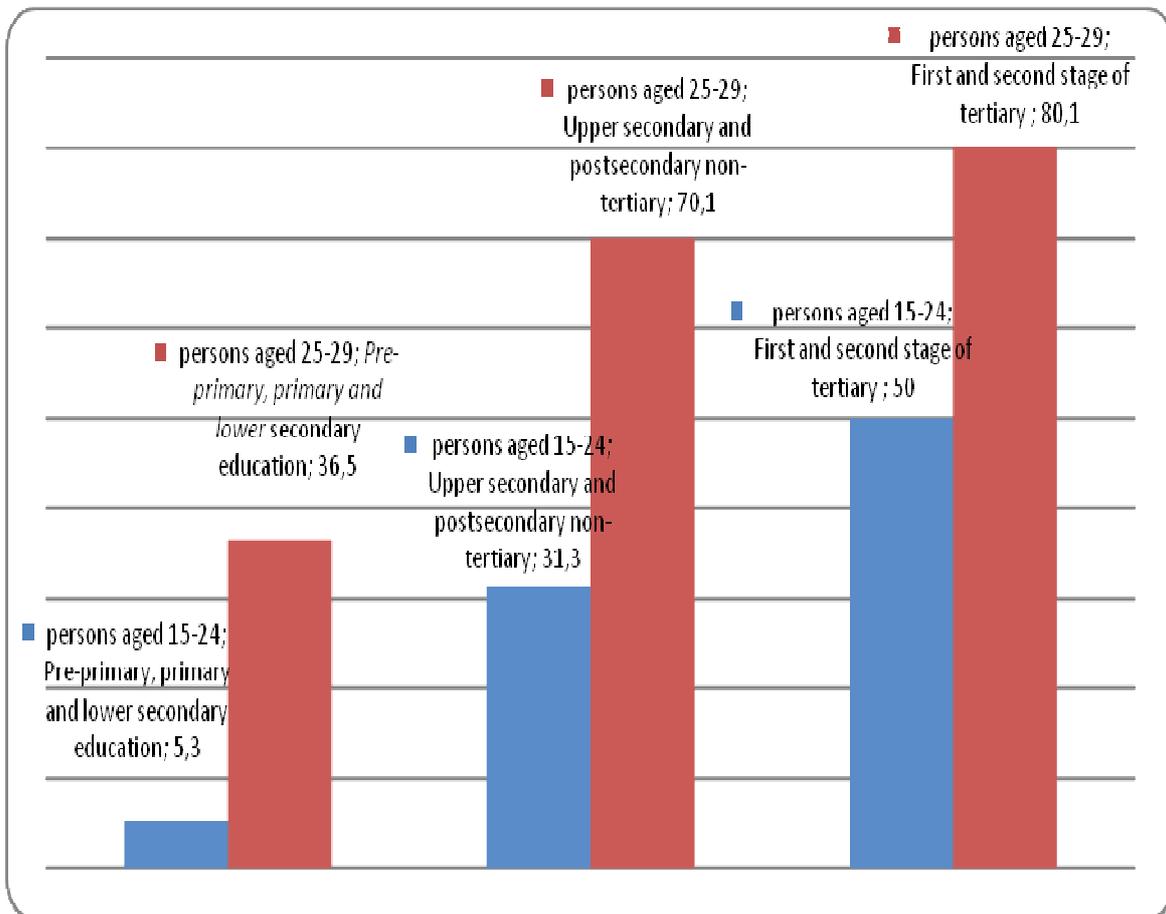
Figure 2 – Male and female employment rate, Hungary, 15-24 and 25-29 years old, 2007, 2011, 2013, in %



Source: Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>, 27.05.2014

The data show that (also) in Hungary it is worth to study. In Hungary the highest is somebody's education level she or he has the better opportunity to find a job. Moreover, educated people are far better paid, several labour economics research proved that "wage premium" of graduated workforce and "wage penalty" for uneducated (compared to secondary level education attainment) are among of the highest in Europe.

Figure 3 – Employment rate according to highest education level, 2013, %



Source: Eurostat, <http://appsso.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/nui/submitViewTableAction.do>, 27.05.2014.

According to the recent survey of Workania (2013) skilled workers aged 17-24 with less than one year experience earn a gross wage of HUF 118 000/month (around EUR 390, slightly more than the guaranteed minimum wage for skilled workers), meanwhile the average starting wage of young people with diploma is the double.

Despite the fact that return on higher education is high (i.e. ensures better chances in the labour market), the number of students in higher education is decreasing in parallel with the massive cuts in state funded places. It led to a 25% drop in the number of higher education enrolment in 2012 and students' protests. (In 2012 government funding for higher education halved in comparison to 2008.) Another serious step back, affecting negatively the chances of lower educated and drop-out children, was that students in Hungary are now only required to stay in school until age 16 (down from previous 18). This government move,

unprecedented in Europe, was justified by the objective of extending the lower-secondary vocational training and introducing the dual system of training, in the view of mitigating the alleged shortage of skilled workers. As a result the number of students accepted to post-secondary non-tertiary, first and second stage of tertiary education in 2011 was 97 800, in 2012 their number decreased to 79 900 and in 2013 to 72 200 (source: [www.felvi.hu](http://www.felvi.hu)).

As concerns the Hungarian youth labour market we can find that young people prefer to be *wage-earners and only few of them – less than 10% of – become entrepreneurs or self-employed. It seems that schools do not care enough to prepare young people to start own business, and also other kind of start-up supports (like financial) are lacking.*

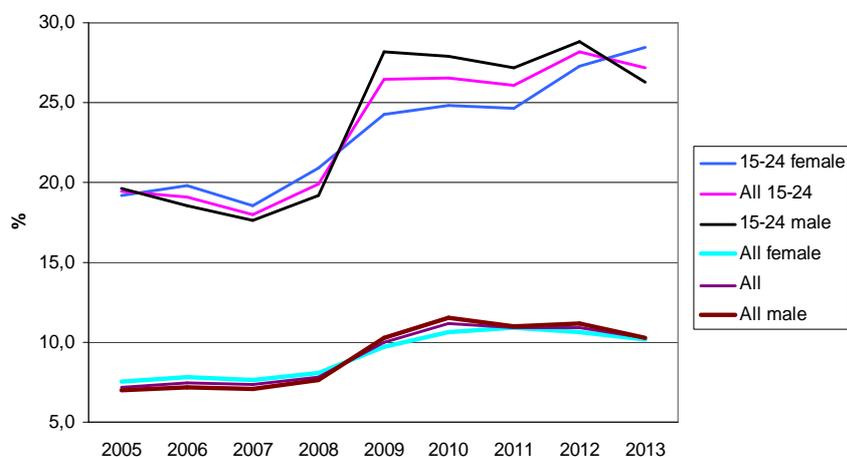
We find a growing share of precarious jobs, especially for young and low-skilled. For instances, as concerns the whole labour force, the fixed term employment contract in Hungary is not frequent (less than 10% of all labour contracts are fixed-term). But their proportion is much higher in case of young people (around 25%). If we take into consideration also the education level, we can establish that the chance to work with open ended contract is higher for those who has higher education. Fix-term contract incidence in case of 15-29 years old with diploma was only 11%, meanwhile with elementary school was 36%)(2010).

In Hungary the part-time work is not so frequent as in several other EU countries. The vast majority of young people – as the whole labour force - work full-time and only few of them (8-10%) work part-time. It is the the situation also in case of girls (7% of women aged 15-29 and 13,8% of women aged 15-19 work part-time). The same happens with the telework, it is minimal (around 8%) in Hungary (Ipsos, 2012).

#### *Youth unemployment*

The share of unemployed young people increased as result of the crisis from 2008 onward. The Hungarian economy has not recovered yet, so far improvement has been partly due to large scale public work and outward migration.

Figure 4 – Unemployment rate by age group and sex, %, 2005-2013



The unemployment has appeared among the higher education graduates as well, due to the mismatch between the demand and supply in the labour market (lack of highly qualified professional workers) and their regional distribution as well. As a special phenomenon the oversupply of the graduated young people remains partly hidden as they frequently accept lower level jobs.

Although youth unemployment rate in Hungary seems to be lower than in the EU, the problems are better characterised by the percentage of young people under 25 who are neither in employment nor in education and training (NEET). Their share is 20,1% in Hungary, meanwhile the EU average is 17%. The NEET rate also shows a significant territorial difference: in the underdeveloped Northern Hungary it is 27,6%, meanwhile in Central Hungary and Central Transdanubia is 15% (Eurostat, 2013).

#### *Youth migration – going abroad to work and study*

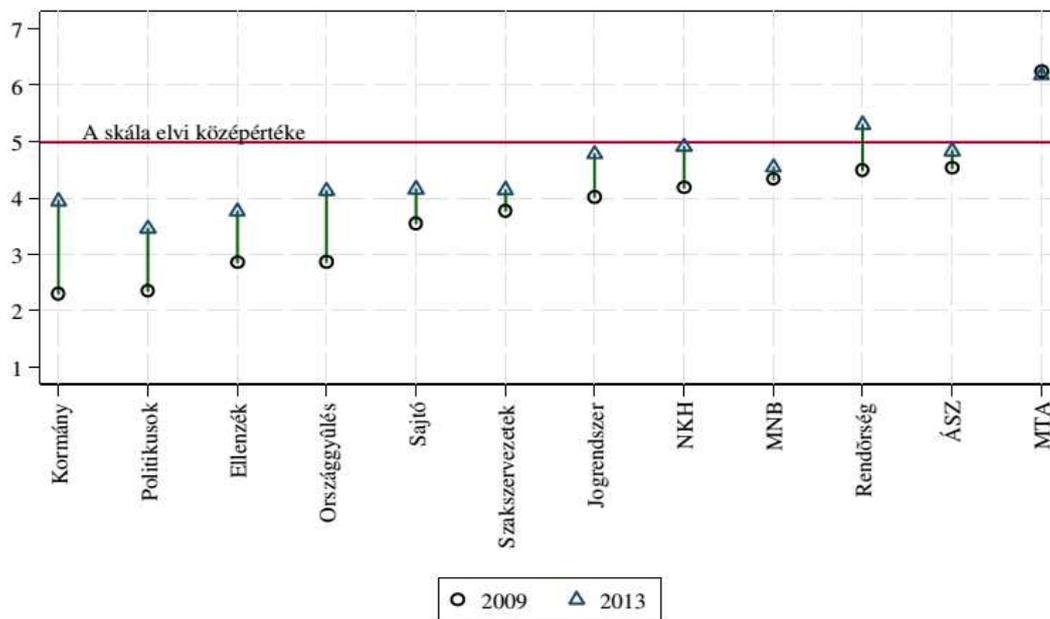
During the latest time one of the most popular way to escape unemployment for young people is to going abroad to work and also to study. In 2013 the 25% of asked persons aged 18-39 had the intent to get long-term, 23% short-term work abroad. In 2013 in Great Britain 26,770 persons (mostly young) asked tax number which is the double of the persons asking tax number in 2007. From 2012 to 2013 the number of Hungarians living in Germany increased by 26%, which is one of the highest growth, following that of the migrants from Syria and Romania. The third country facing the major number of Hungarian migrants is Austria, where in 2013 already worked 62,000 persons, while only (48,000 in 2012. (Sik (2013))

Young people started to go abroad (mainly to the EU countries) in a massive way not only to work but also to study because of the organisational and financial changes in higher education in Hungary. In 2013 740 students applied for a place to start their university studies abroad and 430 of them have been accepted. The Hungarian students prefer England and Scotland, but also many students try to learn in Austria, Germany and the United States (EngAme). This process is independent from the Erasmus programme in which every year several thousand (in the 2011/12 school year, for example, more than 4000) Hungarian students spent some time in an another EU country university.

## 2. Views of young people about trade unions in the country

Unfortunately, there is no representative national survey dealing with this issue. Probably we can set out from the more or less regular surveys measuring public trust in political institutions, though it is hard to use these figures for international comparison. Findings of such surveys have always proved a relatively low ranking of trade unions among different institutions. (It is worth to note that the Hungarian Academy of Sciences enjoyed higher score than the average of the scale in 2009 only. In other words the survey measured general distrust in political institutions in 2009. Positive changes on Figure 1 between 2009 and 2013 are mainly attributable to the very low level of trust, especially in the government and political institutions, in 2009. The 2010 landslide election victory of FIDESZ, the current government party, is reflected in the growing trust in direct political institutions, such as parties, Parliament and government. Relatively small change in the evaluation of trade unions is fairly understandable, they work more independently of the government than many other items in the list.) Generational differences were not investigated by TÁRKI.

Figure 5 – General trust in institutions (Averages of a 1-10 scale, 2009-2013)



Translations of institutions' names (from left to right): government, politicians, opposition, Parliament, press, trade unions, legal system, Public Monies Authority (a hypothetical institution),

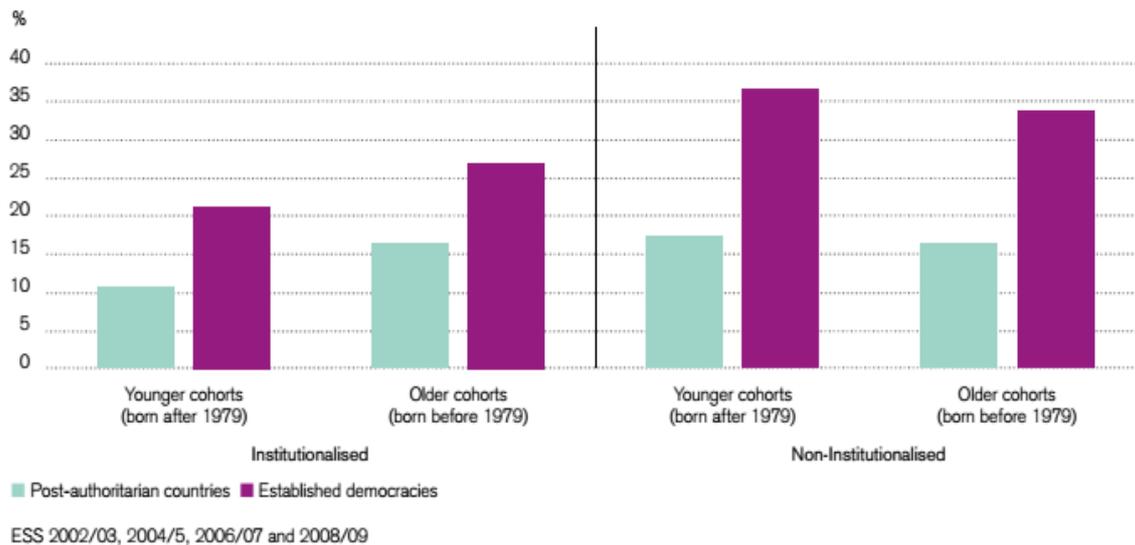
Hungarian National Bank, police, State Audit Office, Hungarian Academy of Sciences. Red line: middle of the scale

*Source: TÁRKI (2013).*

There are many other national research addressed youth's attitude toward political and civil activity. As many previous 'political socialization' studies found, Hungarian Youth 2012, one of the recent studies also states that youth interest in politics is continuously decreasing, disappointment in democracy is prevailing among the young. (Oross 2013) As to the party preferences, it is alarming that in the 2010 general election the share of supporters of the far-right party (Jobbik) was 5-6 times higher in the young voters than among elder people (60+). In addition to political apathy, active youth participation in political institutions is getting extremely lower. In 2000 one-third, in 2004 15%, in 2012 only 6% of the respondents said that he/she is affiliated any way to a civic, political, church-based or charity organisations, or sport-, cultural clubs and other community. (While sport, student and leisure time organisations were the most popular, party and youth organisation membership was below the measurable level.) So the civil society accesses to a very thin stratum of the young and, over the time, this is becoming even thinner.

This is not a special Hungarian phenomenon; low level of participation is a general feature among the "new democracies". As a leaflet of the European Social Survey states "Two decades after transition to democracy, political participation in Central and Eastern Europe remains significantly lower than in Western Europe. People are less likely to engage in institutionalised political action – contacting a politician, working for a political party or organisation – or via non-institutionalised routes such as signing a petition or joining a demonstration. ... The participation gap cannot solely be attributed to the residual effects of older cohorts growing up under a non-democratic regime and being used to limited political involvement." The leaflet provides a fairly convincing chart comparing findings about younger and older generations. "The analysis by age and cohort suggests that the effect of current experiences with corruption are more powerful than the effect of an authoritarian legacy ... especially bad governance and corruption have a strong negative impact on civic engagement in Central and Eastern Europe." (Hooghe and Quintelier, 2014).

Figure 6 – Proportion of respondents in established and post-authoritarian democracies engaging in institutionalised and non-institutionalised political action (ESS)



Variables on civic society activities (working in non-political organisation or association, involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations) were added to that of the genuine political participation. As Table 1 shows, all Hungarian figures are well below the international average. Striking differences are found even in ‘youngish’ forms of activity (e.g. wearing campaign badges).

Table 1 – ESS data on participation in political and civil actions (Hungary vs. all countries, 2012)

| Variables  | All countries |          | Hungary      |          |
|--|---------------|----------|--------------|----------|
|  | Whole sample  | Under 35 | Whole sample | Under 35 |
| Contacted political or government official last 12 months    | 11.7          | 7.9      | 4.9          | 3.0      |
| Worked in political party or action group last 12 months     | 3.9           | 2.9      | 1.1          | 0.3      |
| Worked in another organisation or association last 12 months | 13.2          | 11.4     | 3.3          | 1.8      |
| Worn or displayed campaign badge/sticker last 12 months      | 6.7           | 7.7      | 1.2          | 0.7      |

<sup>1</sup> Online data tabulation of ESS. (Weighting: population size weight and design weight, subsets: under 35) <http://nesstar.ess.nsd.uib.no/webview/>.

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|  |      |      |      |      |
|--|------|------|------|------|
| Signed petition last 12 months   | 20.2 | 18.7 | 3.0  | 3.0  |
| Taken part in lawful public demonstration last 12 months   | 8.2  | 10.0 | 3.6  | 3.8  |
| Boycotted certain products last 12 months  | 15.7 | 12.1 | 3.7  | 2.7  |
| Involved in work for voluntary or charitable organisations, how often past 12 months,<br>Value= % of NEVER answers | 62.2 | 61.8 | 79.4 | 78.0 |

### **3. The interviewees**

#### **3.1. Education and professional career**

*How can young people become activists, active trade union members? What are the obstacles and how can they deal with them? The interviewees answered these questions.*

Most of the interviewees gained university or college degree (most characteristically in legal profession), except for three (two technicians, one vocational training), however they also take/took part in evening courses at the company or in a university. Further education is a part of their professional career, connected either to their employer or to the union. (For instance, a full time union office with teacher's degree now attends health and safety programme at university, the technician enrolled the university's evening courses for adult education, etc.) Those as school leavers got a job outside the union accounted about a relatively swift promotion in their professional career.

A couple of union representatives mentioned that as early as in the school he/she was elected for representatives for high-school or university students in self-governing bodies. One of them was a leader of university students' national organisation, organized demonstrations and then took part in the delegation negotiating with the government. Obviously, their organising-negotiation-communication skills, and even the acquired political network is useful in their current job, on behalf of the trade union confederation.

#### **3.2. Trade union career**

Seven interviewees have a full time union job, they are the leaders of confederations' youth organisations, plus one person has the same job at a sectoral union. (However, their job descriptions as a rule include other union tasks too, as organization, legal expertise or international relations – depending on their education and experience.) In most cases, being the youngest person in the union staff they “automatically” got the youth leader position, which is otherwise an elected post usually – see below.

Four of them start the union job right as a school-leaver, which had sometimes preceded an internship at the union. Three other persons started the employment career in his/her profession, and at the workplace got contacted with the union (joined the union, then was elected to representative, or later to higher level rep.) And finally, having acknowledged his/her union activity, they got invitation into the union staff. This sort of more traditional union career, in which the would-be union staff member also gathers workplace experience, occurred in three cases, two of them had initially higher level education attainment. Their career within the union is firmly tied to the organisational status of the youth section – see below.

There were only two interviewees who do the union activity as volunteers, along with their work. Nonetheless, it is a general trend that company unions cannot afford to have a full time officer in charge of youth affairs. This holds mostly for sectoral unions, personal overlap is characteristic: one company's union activist is the leader of the sectoral youth organisation too. Company union reps are legally protected, and are provided with appropriate time-off for union activity, though the latter is assured rather on a basis of informal agreement with the local management than by the meticulous application of relevant regulations of the Labour Code. (It worth mentioning that union reps' protection and time-off is a topical issue in Hungary, for the 2012 Labour Code introduced changes detrimental to unions.)

As far as motives for joining the union is concerned, family background is of secondary importance, one interviewee's father was also union leader, in another case a relative already worked for the union. For those began to work in their profession, personal relationship at the workplace was decisive, they met a union rep as a colleague, whose role model was influential, and who convinced them that joining the union makes sense.

Of course, the interviewees have no information about the next step of the career, when they reach 35, and have to resign from youth position. However, we have sporadic knowledge about their predecessors' career path. Either they remained in the union staff – many of them as full time officers at company or sectoral unions, sometimes as 'mentors' of younger officers, or they switch to a professional, managerial career and resign from the union position. The youth sections seem to have a role to 'educate and socialize' the next generation of leaders, not necessary for the trade unions only. (A different experience was formulated at a public sector union: the employers force the candidates for

managerial position to choose between union and professional career. For instance, at the police union the deputy secretary resigned for this reason).

## **4. Membership of young sections**

Through the interviews we could gather estimates only for the share of young employees and trade union members. Unfortunately, official data on union membership is quite outdated. According to the Hungarian Central Statistical Office's Labour Force Survey, in 2009 the overall union density was 12%, for employees under 35 was it was even less, only 7,3%. While 35% of employees worked at unionised workplaces (within respondents able to answer the question), for young employees this figure was 26% only. (The share of those could not answer was 2,4% higher among the young.) According to experts' estimates, unionisation has been further declining since 2009.<sup>1</sup>

### **4.1. At national, sectoral organisations**

The share of the young within the union membership varies between 1% and 40%. (ÉSZT 1%, VDSZ 5%, SZEF 6%, MSZOSZ 10%, VSZ 16-20 %, MOSZ 20%, KASZ 40%) The outliers are somewhat explained by the generational differences across the sectors and by legislative changes. Though the age limit is 40 in the public sector confederation, the number of member organisations with young people is continuously declining (police, armed forces, etc.) This is partly attributed to the fact that the membership due is not deducted by the employer any longer, partly because a flat-rate fee was introduced that is viewed unjust by many young members. On the other hand, there are many young employees in the commerce sector, because young job seekers – often with different educational background – cannot find other vacancies (for instance, cashiers may have a law degree.)

The composition of young membership (blue collar/white collar, fixed term/open ended contracts, by sexes) mainly reflects the composition of employees in the organisational domain. Thus in the public sector white collars (80-90 %) and women (70-80 %) are overrepresented. In the commerce sector the share of female workers is also 90%, but the share of manual workforce is similarly high. The differences are less pronounced across confederation engaged in the private/competitive sector and they have a mixed membership. In the LIGA, for instance, the membership is mainly white collar in

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<sup>1</sup> The Hungarian sample of the European Social Survey has newer data on trade union membership. They also shows dramatic drop in unionisation, however ESS measures systematically lower figures than LFS. (The presumably methodological reasons for the differences are unknown.) According to the 2002 round 5.3% of employees were union members, and 9,5% of employees under 35. The latest figures for 2012 were 5.3% and 4.1%, respectively.

the electricity industry, while blue collars prevail at the railway. In MOSZ men are dominant (due to the organisations in armed forces and long distance bus companies), but extremely high the share of women in the union of paramedical staff.

The labour market problems that confederations face are also different according to their membership domain. In the public sector employees have been suffering from wage freeze for six years, from hiring ban for two years. At the same time in the public administration the share of the young has recently grown following the wave of dismissals when the right wing government came into power in 2010. (There was a short period when legislative changes allowed employers to sack anybody without justification, and also nowadays dismissal is lawful based on the loss of confidence in the civil servant. This latter may be an outcome of a critical opinion posted at Facebook, that is the reason of general fear among the young, which makes mobilisation for demonstrations difficult for the union.)

In the chemical industry young members are mainly employed in the rubber industry, which requires heavy physical efforts. In turn, here labour turnover is high, and the industry is dominated by Asian multinationals which do not tolerate union presence. Moreover, the union is hardly able to contact workers, for employers do not allow them to enter into the workplace, and right after the shifts buses are waiting for commuter workers at the gate of the factory.

The representatives of Liga and chemical union complained about the growing share of fixed-term contracts. (No statistics available).

## **4.2. At company unions**

At the electricity company the unionisation rate is about 40%, roughly one-fourth of members are young. The young members are mainly employed in offices or at the front desk. At the Post the unionisation rate is 50%, the share of young members is 16%. The composition: 68% female, 32% male, which is characteristic for the whole workforce, too. Few young people work in post offices, in big towns labour turnover is huge. The main reason for this is the low wage, a young man cannot make the livelihood for a family here. Women mainly work at the front desk and in back offices, in split working time or part-time in the countryside, where the post is almost the only durable employer.

## **5. Institutional position of youth in the internal trade unions structure**

### **5.1. Organisational framework**

Youth sections of peak confederations and federations were established between 1992 and 2013, usually with the decision made by the supreme body of the organisation. (The earliest was created by MSZOSZ and VDSZ, then KASZ in 2004 and finally MOSZ and ÉSZT in 2013.) Aging membership was the hidden agenda behind the establishment everywhere – this is the reason why relatively young organisations, Liga and MOSZ were lagging behind –, as well as the need for education of the next generation of activists. Nonetheless, in addition practical considerations mattered too, to make youth able to apply independently for resources and to partake in international programmes. SZEFE youth section, one of the oldest organisation have already survived a crisis: the youth section hollowed out when the police and armed force unions with younger membership left the confederation, thus the youth organisation was terminated and then the confederation restarted organisation and the section resumed its operation in 2012.

As a rule, trade union members under 35 are automatically members of the youth organisations everywhere. In practice, however, the youth sections operate as a network of young activists, and the broader membership attends the more popular programmes only. The number of activists varies a lot, about 100 at SZEFE, 100-150 at MSZOSZ, 20 at KASZ and 10-15 at VDSZ. The young sections may have separate task forces, for example, in KASZ for organizing, planning and flash-mobs. ÉSZT has a somewhat different internal division: the young section is an umbrella organisation for the four member organisations: scientific workers, medical universities, higher education and engineers.

Everywhere a narrow leadership is in charge of management of the section (from co-presidents to a 5-15 strong presidium, covering the main organisational domains, with its own by-law), which is headed by the president. Members of leadership may be formally delegated by the member organisations, but it also may turn into an informal, friendly society. The president is not necessarily elected by the activists, he/she is rather nominated/elected by the supreme body of the union. Also this body makes the decision on participation of youth in the union leadership. The youth president usually has a seat in the presidium of the union, without voting right in the majority of unions. Should he/she has voting

right, this situation is recorded as a big success. (The youth organisations' president is voting member of MSZOSZ presidium, youth has three votes in the congress. So does the president at SZEFG, they also have three votes, equal to the voting power of a mid-sized member organisation. The same holds for VSZ, where two votes are reserved for the young. Lobbying efforts of Liga's youth organisation was acclaimed as it resulted in upgrading their organisational status: in the 2013 congress they became a 'committee' instead of the former section, therefore the president has a permanent seat in the presidium. Similar objectives were formulated at ÉSZT, too.)

The above paragraph almost fully described the youth participation in the union leadership. Instead of successive declaration of 'young making', in practice bodies prevails to include mainly people from the elder generations, the young only may replace those who retire or leave the organisation. "The big old guys know what is good for the young ... They ask for our opinion, but not always in good faith, to consider it seriously."

The youth sections have no annual budget line (except for the postal union), the founding organisations usually finance programmes, or accept budget proposals for events or for activities of a certain period. On the other hand, they utilize external funds as well. (Such funding is provided by the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Norway Grant for several organisations, especially for conferences and training.)

The youth sections have no legal personality either, except for the MSZOSZ organisation, which was established with the intention to create an independent organisation, capable for bidding. Legal personality, however, is of importance for advocacy activities too, for this is a precondition to be a member in the National Youth Council (NIT) and to negotiate with employer associations. That is why MOSZ, parallel with the establishment of the youth section also registered a couple of organisation with legal personality. One of them concluded an agreement on student work with the relevant association of employers (ISZOSZ) and on exchange of services with NIT. A similar initiative was at the railway union, the "Foundation for Railway Youth" is able to bid independently and as a civil organisation is allowed to collect the so called '1%' donations through the personal income tax system.

The three confederations that announced their merger (MSZOSZ, Autonomous and SZEFG), have already established their join youth section – without legal personality. Reportedly two of them (SZEFG, Autonomous) rejected the idea to join MSZOSZ organisation that already has legal personality. This would have been the simplest procedure technically by modifying the Charter of the organisation, however, presumably the two other organisations evaluated this move as challenging the principle of merger based on equal footing, and i.e. such a merger might threaten with losing their identity.

## 5.2. Activity

Organisational functions (from the angle of union objectives) of youth sections were scrutinized in three highlighted fields: organizing, mobilizing, and preparing next generation of union leadership.

Recruiting new members is a common objective; however the majority of respondents refused concrete organisation activity, saying that this would be the task of member organisations or shop stewards. They assume an indirect role for themselves, for instance, with broad-based invitation for their events. Or, with participating in various programmes with young audience and making the union attractive for youth. (For instance, a lecture in a nursery was as successful as many interested in joining the union; they have gone to places where nobody even heard about unions – such a place was an high school specialised for art.) This outreaching activity always includes delivering flyers, brochures, etc. (The MSZOSZ and MOSZ outreaches to pop music festivals with mass audience; KASZ goes to village festivals, fairs with a tent to make the union more popular.) Unions provide casually free services for every employee: Postal union organise a series of event called “Year of Health” – they go with medical screening buses to various workplaces, and this service is topped by enhanced union presence: with posters, flyers and small presents that facilitate activists’ direct contact to potential members; MOSZ together with employer associations provides legal service (JOGPONT) free of charge which is now available for 130,000 student workers – this way many contacted the union summertime –; MOSZ made its E-learning facility available for member organisations of NIT – the objective is to expand the number of subscribers from 200 to 2,000. Despite these examples of ‘free for everyone’ services, many respondents were convinced that the clue to union organising is providing members with valuable services (preferential purchasing cards, recreation, insurances, etc.) Obviously, not the youth sections are in charge of organising such services, but they are keen to echo the popular view among Hungarian unionists that service provision is the key in order to counterbalance the ‘free-rider’ phenomenon.

Mobilizing the members, public actions, especially attractive for the young, is also a common objective, however we find respondents who would also delegate this activity to member organisations. The characteristic wording was: “Our goal is to overcome apathy.” It is relatively easy to mobilize SZEF members, for the majority live in the countryside; they love to come for a couple of day long weekend programmes. On the contrary, according to VDSZ representative, the current political situation – close to the general election – is not favourable for public

rallies; the members became more disappointed, passive. The heydays of such demonstrations were in 2011. Then factory workers, with the support of local union leaders, came to en mass to demonstrations of Solidarity movement, to Flash-mob protests against changes in the pension system, etc. “That was a more active period, by now the flame has been distinguished.”

Educating next generation of union leadership is also an approved objective that is why union centres assure relatively generous funding for the youth sections, even in hard times. According to SZEF representative, along with the training courses, encouraging the young to take union positions is also a topical issue for the section. This is implemented by communication skill trainings at ÉSZT. KASZ continuously provides promotion possibilities. At MSZOSZ all people completed youth training are considered would-be union leaders; there have been many examples for such a career path in the organisation.

### **5.3. Programmes, events**

For the question about concrete activities, one respondent said that their work is bidirectional: on the one hand involving and educate the young, on the other hand advocacy on behalf of the young, regardless to their union membership. Naturally the two directions are not clearly separable; however, the rich collection of activities might be clustered from this angle. The broadest based mobilisation can be achieved by leisure time programmes – some respondents did not even consider them union activity. Trainings, conferences and participation in projects aim to preparing active advocacy. Every year all youth sections partake in a three-day reunion – organised by the six confederations together. (This year it was in March in Balatonföldvár.) The objective is to get the sections closer together, strengthening solidarity, and giving the “old guard” a lesson how to unite their forces. In the followings we highlight some examples from the abundant collection of various actions. (Some of these actions will be discussed in detail in the next chapter of the report).

*Youth sections used to have leisure-time programmes.* MSZOSZ has “pancake-day”, charity action. VSZ has “Young Railway Workers Summer Reunion” – every year for 17 years. EDSZ has reunions with factory visits. MOSZ has family programme, camp for team building. VDSZ has family and sport programmes, recreation houses. Postal union organises bowling party, excursions for the young, family and children programmes and Liga summer camp.

*There are several conferences dealing with youth issues.* FES (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung) used to sponsor conferences with the participation of all confederations. (In 2013 they were focussed the public sector: Teachers' career model, sectoral collective bargaining, family-friendly workplace, job opportunities for the young in the public sector. In 2014 the same issues will be discussed with foreign experts and another meeting on New Public Management is planned too.) MOSZ has a series of conferences with the following topics: migration, public sector and youth unemployment; a state secretary was invited to each meeting. Together with FES, MOSZ held a successful German-Hungarian conference on dual system of vocational training.

*Education and training is important issue for trade union youth:* SZEFG has offered lately regional basic education with funding from Grant Norway (with the following topics: trade union history, union organising, international relations, etc.) MSZOSZ offers regular training four times a year for young trade unionists. Postal union in Austrian –Hungarian cooperation offers mentoring of young activists. Beyond these events on special topics, almost all youth sections hold regularly communication and team building trainings.

Central European Youth Trade Union Project (CEYTUN) was initiated by FES in 2013, for a coordinated education in the Visegrad region (plus Austria and Germany included.). The objective is to make the youth sections capable for coordinated actions (for example in the ETUC), they hold at least two conferences in a year with 50-60 participants. KASZ participates in another FES project: "Democracy 2000", in which a survey was conducted in vocational schools to assess youth' opinion on democracy, and then roundtable discussions was held on the findings. As to the latter, 'first voters' have a negative views on functioning of democratic institutions and politics in general, their ambition is to take a job abroad, and most probably their voting pattern will follow that of their parents.

*MOSZ runs advocacy on behalf of the young.* MOSZ initiated legislative changes on student work, which extends the preferential wage levies for the so called passive students (i.e. those who postpone a term or a year at the university). Another initiative of MOSZ deals with wages for internship. This scored a wide scale media coverage, and one political party (unfortunately just the extreme right wing 'Jobbik') will submit a proposal into the Parliament.

*Young trade unionists organise demonstrations:* for example they organised a flash mobs for the World Day for Decent Work and about the causalities of work accidents.

*Young trade unionists consider important the public relations.* MOSZ managed that all professional conference was attended by a state secretary, and this assured publicity. For instance, the government programme called “Action Plan for Preserving Workplaces” was officially announced at MOSZ event.

## 6. Trade union for the youth

### 6.1. Strategy, plans

We can put the question whether have trade unions a comprehensive strategy which deals with the young people? What are the main objectives and tools of such strategy?

Based on our research finding we can state as overall conclusion that comprehensive youth strategy would be well needed but it is missing. Neither the examined confederations, nor the sectoral federations and company trade unions have comprehensive strategy concerning the youth. However it does not mean that they totally would have forgotten about the youth. For example the National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions (MSZOSZ) in a Congress document paragraph tackles issues concerning youth. What is even more surprising - with the exception of one, the SZEFIT (youth division of Cooperation Forum of Trade Unions, SZEFT) – neither the interviewed youth divisions have yet any elaborated comprehensive youth strategy, although they agree with the need of it. True, the youth strategy of ÉSZT (Trade Union Confederation of Intellectual Workers) is at the moment under social debate and hopefully it will be accepted by the Congress of the confederation in autumn this year.

If we put the question that what youth would expect from trade union we find that *the young people await from the trade union the increase of their wage and non-wage income, support of the harmonisation of work and family life, etc. but they don't await any kind of participation in party politics (VDSZ/Autonomous)*. There are the findings also of the small-scale, Internet-based survey carried out by youth secretary of SZEFT. (Nagy 2013) However, avoiding partisan politics is getting more common in the strategy of confederations too. This surprising development – contradictory to the historical affiliation of Western unions to the political movements – could be attributed to manifold reasons in Hungary. Primarily to the politically heterogenic membership – it is understandable that union leaders try to exclude the burst of political conflicts within the organisations. Post-transition experiences are also makes union leaders cautious: in the nineties unions did not benefit too much from the alliance with the Hungarian Socialist Party. And finally, nowadays in the lack of any strong

opposition party it is difficult to say which party would be an attractive choice for unions.

The youth divisions have plans and support ideas which channel to the “mother” trade union organisation. These targets mostly concern a concrete and partial objective, for example solution of children day care in case of working parents (Liga); improvement of working conditions for young workers (ELMŰ); solution of housing for young workers and lifelong learning (Liga); wages for apprentices (National Confederation of Workers Council -MOSZ), supporting young people starting their carrier (ELMŰ); establishing carrier office (MOSZ); developing website (ÉSZT) and youngish image (KASZ). The measures applied by them include visits directly at workplaces, organisations of talks in the shops previously agreeing with the shop manager or in case of major establishment with the HR manager (KASZ); finding efficient people (KASZ); visiting the workplaces with (health) screening buses and organisation of open days, PR gifts, talks (Posta).

## **6.2. Results**

### **a) Collective agreements**

*The collective agreements do not tackle separately the youth in none of the analysed organisations. Its reasons are that the young trade union members would need a stronger possibility to say within the trade union organisation to be able to represent more efficiently their own specific interests in the collective agreements (VSZ). Also within the trade union organisation people are afraid of the stronger representation of interests of a specific stratum which could divide the membership (Liga). Further, the interests of youth appear in other type of documents (for example in study contract) (Autonomous/Trade Union of Chemical Workers).*

There are some exceptions as well as the MOSZ prepares topics for collective negotiation in concern of youth. The MOSZ proposes that also apprentices should be covered by collective agreements. Possible topic for negotiation: mentoring-tutoring, study holiday. All these are still only ideas without results in practice. In the Hungarian Post (Posta) the representative of the young employees too takes part in the process of wage negotiation. In the benefit of young employees the trade union has reached that everybody can return to work after child care and the absences due to the children’ sickness are handled flexibly.

## **b) Participation in social dialogue**

*The picture is mixed but if there is any youth participation it is rather formal than substantive. At the national level we find the above already mentioned National Youth Council (Nemzeti ifjúsági Tanács -NIT) has been established but youth organisation without legal entity (like for example like the Liga's) cannot take part in it. The opinions on the national Youth Council are mixed. The National Youth Council is an independent registered youth organisation which foundation was stimulated by the government but the government itself does not take part in it. There are youth organisations which hope for a start of useful activity in it and try to join in its activity (MSZOSZ-SZISZ, SZEFIT). According to the VDSZ/Autonomous in the National Youth Council take part organisations asked by the government to do so. VDSZ is also sometimes invited but as it used to happen in the last moment they do not go. The National Youth Council has its working groups (like working group of training, of life carrier, etc.) Notwithstanding these forums are better information forums, they have not a serious influence. Despite of it their importance lies in the national level presence of youth (SZEFE/SZEFIT). At the agenda of the only tripartite national level consultation body, which is the Forum of the Competitive Sector and the Government (VKF ), we cannot find issues on youth like the dual vocational training (Liga). There is neither social dialogue opportunity to interfere in the vocational training system, currently under reorganisation, in which the economic chamber takes the lead. (MOSZ).*

*At the sectoral level we find only very few examples like KASZ which takes part in the sectoral social dialogue.*

*At EU level the representative of SZEFEFIT took part in a series of negotiation of social partners at EU level. As a result an action plan has been developed at June 2013 on youth employment. The national level implementation of this action plan is now going on.*

### **6.3. Information, communication with youth**

*There have been several surveys in Hungary on the need of young people but their results and depth are already ambiguous. A survey on youth in commercial professional schools has been carried out by KASZ. The youth division of KASZ visits various schools in a year. At the end of the information meeting or lecture a questionnaire is filled by the students. They can tell then in what kind of*

programme they would like to take part in. Similar questionnaires are prepared to assess the needs of working young people. At the spring of 2014 in the beginning of training in Balatonföldvár an on-line survey was done on how young people think about the trade union movement and about their own presence in the on-line communication. The same questionnaire was asked after the training too. The opinions changed only insignificantly (MSZOSZ-SZISZ). The president of SZE FIT prepared in 2013-ban her diploma thesis on the expectation of young workers towards the trade union movement with the aim at promoting trade union renewal. The questionnaire was answered by 400 persons (Nagy 2013).

At company level a survey was carried out in the Gedeon Richter pharmaceutical company (which trade union belongs to VDSZ). The survey showed deficiency in the terrain of community building, solidarity. The young people await from the trade union the increase of their wage and non-wage income, support of the harmonisation of work and family life, etc. but they don't await any kind of participation in party politics (VDSZ/Autonomous). Also in the electrical company, ELMŰ, there were attempts but the people didn't fill the questionnaires. It is easier to reach the young people who are already trade union members: knowing their telephone number they are asked directly.

*We can put the question whether is any special communication developed to address the young people? Are there specific communication strategies means and themes that make it easier to reach young people?*

*We found that in the vast majority of the asked organizations and their youth divisions the forms of on-line communication play important role, first of all the appearance on the webpage of the mother organization and the own Facebook page, but also in some cases the appearance by videos in the you tube. Among the on-line communications tools the most common and today already generally used tool is the Facebook (KASZ, Posta, ELMŰ-EVDSZ, Liga, MSZOSZ-SZISZ, SZE FIT, ÉSZT, VDSZ/Autonomous). According to the experiences of KASZ Facebook is visited regularly by the majority of young people. Earlier the youth division of MSZOSZ (SZISZ) had its own webpage but it merged into the webpage of the 'mother' organisation, MSZOSZ. SZE FIT has a sub-page within the webpage of the SZE F. Also the young trade unionists of Post have their sub-page within the webpage of Trade Union of Postal Worker. Among the tools we can find also the You Tube and short videos (ÉSZT, VDSZ/Autonomous). SZE FIT has also its own correspondence list which includes 300 persons. They receive directly the information and new contents (by e-mail). The youth division*

of Postal Workers has its presence (its own permanent column) in the paper form trade union press.

The youngish style and image is very important (SZEFIT, VDSZ). SZEFIT uses its own specific colours (green) in its on-line devices. SZEFIT also has its own gadgets of promotion like T-shirt, bag, its own logo, portfolio, etc. In the design of these objects the communication committee of SZEFIT took part.

The young trade unionists take part in communication training. The objective of participation in the training is the better performance in the media (ÉSZT).

*Youth activists found also some deficiencies, negative experiences. For example MOSZ youth activist has negative experiences in concern of trade union webpages, their content is not interesting. Also it is problem that the workers miss trade union newspapers in paper format. Unfortunately there are not enough financial sources to print/publish them. There are several important information which are lacking, for example on employment relations. Also it is a problem that direct campaigns, the title words, the trade unions' opinion on relevant topics (like strike law) are missing (MOSZ). At company level there would be need to disseminate the content of the valid collective agreement (ELMÜ).*

## **7. Proposals**

### **7.1. What could the trade union do more for the young people?**

*The sectoral federations emphasise on the responsibility of confederations. So, according to KASZ (which is a sectoral federation) it is the confederation level where could be done more for the youth. The confederations should respect and support more the young persons and the senior colleagues should not be afraid of them. At the meantime the confederations emphasise on the need of extra resources (MSZOSZ-SZISZ, ÉSZT, SZEFIT). The youth divisions of the national confederations (MSZOSZ-SZISZ, SZEFIT, ÉSZT) were agreed on the need of much more resources. They emphasized that without adequate investments no results would be achieved (MSZOSZ-SZISZ). What the additional resources would be needed for? What is what the trade union could do yet? According to their answers there would be needed much more money to organise programmes for youth and much stronger campaigns as before (ÉSZT, SZEFIT, MSZOSZ-SZISZ). According to SZEFIT the confederation would need a full-time permanent employee to deal with the youth issues. There would be needed to create an adequate image, youngish trade union brand – but it is not possible to do in part-time either and also there would be need to visit regularly countryside, it would be good for recruitment new members as well (for example visiting schools). The more human resource is needed to prepare expert papers. According to ÉSZT there would be needed to disseminate results, to inform youth broadly already in the schools before entering labour market and also more financial resources would be needed to the education of new generation of trade union leaders; the sporadic week-end trainings are not sufficient, it would be needed – as it happens in Austria – for a permanent trade union education. There would be important to establish and/or promote social partnership in such a specific area as students' work as well as to publish booklets to inform students.*

*We can also assume that the interviewed company level youth divisions (Post, ELMŰ) are more satisfied than the confederations and federations. According to the youth representative of Post, the Post trade union does its bests for the youth. The trade union leadership is characterised by professionalism and the communication measures and tools (like leaflets) are good. Notwithstanding, due*

to the age of trade union members and officers it would be needed to pay more attention to the rejuvenation of membership. The key for this is the recruitment of new trade union members in the Post.

The youth trade unionists of ELMÜ emphasized on the importance of training (communication training, health and safety training) for every trade union officer. They also consider as trade unionists' success, that the company level – ELMÜ - collective agreement has better conditions than the sectoral level one. Despite of the successes, in ELMÜ would be need for more programmes, reduced rates on purchasing some services or products (like insurance, telephone, etc.), more efficient help (like legal advices) for the rank and file trade union members.

## **7.2. What the young members could do for the strengthening of trade union?**

*What do and can trade unions expect from young people? What do they offer to the union?*

*According to the interviews the young members should have more initiatives, for example they should create their own programme (VDSZ/Autonomous). As it was mentioned above almost everywhere is missing an own comprehensive youth strategy. That is, the strengthening of youth division means also the reinforcement of the 'mother' organisation. Also the recruitment of the trade union membership is a vital condition of the strengthening of the trade union. As it marked out from the answers of the interviewed persons, the young trade unionist can help in this but it is not a confederation level task (SZEFIT, ÉSZT, MSZOSZ-SZISZ, MOSZ). The youth divisions at sectoral and/or company level could do much more in this field. It is true, that a young person can address to another young person with more success than an older. Taking this into consideration also the youth divisions of confederation can help in the members' recruitment, if not directly but indirectly with their personal presence, lectures. For example a conversation in a nursery seemingly influenced positively the recruitment process (SZEFIT). Another example is when at the University of Szeged a new member organisation could be established with the help of a confederation (MOSZ). There is also need to the creation of a so called hard-core (SZEFIT); the hard-core established within or by the youth division serves also to the strengthening of the same 'mother' union (SZEFIT).*

### **7.3. Why is difficult to organise young people? How would it be possible to make more fruitful the members' recruitment among the young people?**

To organise young people is not easy. The trade union does not attract young people not at least because it hasn't a proper image. Young trade unionists not in vain tell that youngish style and image is needed to draw in young people. But not only is a new image needed. There is also need to include into the trade union programmes/strategies and also in the collective agreements issues dealing with the particular problems of the young generation, like special working conditions, reconciliation of work and study (beside the reconciliation of work and family), carrier guidance, housing issues, etc.

To organise young people is difficult also for the reason that they simply have not information about trade union in general and many times in their workplace in particular. As one of the interviewed person told, there is vainly a trade union shop steward at the workplace, she/he doesn't go to the new young worker and doesn't offer the possibility to enter the trade union, indicating the benefits of trade union membership. If the young people know about the trade union at his/her workplace he/she has not motivation to enter as they don't see the positive impact or the role of the trade union.

The recruitment of young people in schools (professional secondary schools, in higher education) is almost impossible; they lack knowledge, information and motivation. The asked leaders of youth divisions have several ideas to make more effective the recruitment. These are first of all more numerous and more attractive programmes, direct – face to face – meetings, youngish and attractive image, better dissemination of the results of trade unions (like collective agreements), supporting young people at entering the world of work.

The members' recruitment could be done more efficient by more common programmes (KASZ). There would be needed music and or dancing events where 60% would be music and 40% trade union (MSZOSZ-SZISZ). The youth divisions of trade unions should be present at different other events like 1<sup>st</sup> of May, carrier days (ÉSZT). Also great emphasis has to be laid on creating a special youngish look. The trade union has to be 'sexy'! (SZEFIT) There are needs for short, strong videos which are not expensive to be prepared, it is enough to have only one camera (KASZ, MSZOSZ-SZISZ). The Facebook and website of the organisation and/or youth division (MSZOSZ-SZISZ) must be more attractive. It

would be needed to make know the results of collective and wage bargaining as successes achieved by the trade union (Post, ELMŰ). *The support of young workers in specific fields would also help in the recruitment of new members.* Such specific field is for example to obtain interns' places for the young persons (ÉSZT) or the support of young persons during entering the world of work (ÉSZT).

#### **7.4. How the trade unions could address the young people?**

*As concerns the addressing the young people the following ideas have been raised: dissemination on information about trade unions in the schools (Liga, MOSZ); attractive image and campaigns (SZEF), attractive services for young people (MOSZ), organisation of local (company level) community (SZEF) and cooperation with the employers' organisation (MOSZ).*

One of the most important terrains to address to the youth is the school. It is important that the teachers and also the headmasters would be committed to dissemination of knowledge on the world of work. It would be good to include this information to regular curriculum of schools (Liga). Unfortunately sometimes it is not easy for trade unions to enter the schools and informing the students about the trade unions as the headmasters sometimes are afraid of the trade unions presence (VDSZ/Autonomous). Also according to MOSZ the vocational school would be one of the best terrains to familiarise students with trade unions. According to experience of the MOSZ it is easy only in those schools which already have a kind of cooperation with trade unions (like in the terrain of Post or railways). It was also emphasized the importance on the knowledge of good practices in this field in other countries (Liga).

The congress document of MSZOSZ (2006) indicates: "To gain youth for the trade union movement is of vital importance. One way is to make to emerge local trade union teams in the professional schools with the participation of students and to create attractive forms of movement for the youth".

According to MOSZ the services which are attractive for the youth should be centrally negotiated, and valuable services would make joining the union and paying the fee worth while financially for the young. (The union due is presently highly varies in the different unions.) (MOSZ).

## **8. Good practices**

### **8.1. Good practices: addressing and organising youth**

*What are examples of successful youth membership campaigns or approaches?*

#### *Addressing youth*

As part of a project Liga will teach information on employment in secondary and professional schools.

The motivation and knowledge of teachers is important. In the school year of 2008/2009 with the financial support of National Council of Professional and Adult Training to the initiative of MSZOSZ the adult training organization, ÉTOSZ trained 400 teachers in secondary schools on labour affairs. Also as result of the project ten booklets – a knowledge base on labour issues – were edited.

We may not neglect the importance and positive influence of personal addressing. The leader of youth department of KASZ told about her positive experience during a visit in a professional school of commerce where she reached to enter into contact with a capable and interested young person who alone recruited ten new trade union members and the possibility of the establishment of a local student trade union organisation emerged.

During one and a half year in the students' magazine "Zsiráf" (Giraffe) the SZISZ youth division had a permanent column to report on trade union movement and the SZISZ activity (MSZOSZ-SZISZ).

#### *Trade union member's recruitment in the SME-s in cooperation with the employers' organization*

The MOSZ in 19 counties and sectors in cooperation with the employers' organisation carried out a campaign. The results of it are around 2000-2500 new trade union members, working mostly in SME-s. MOSZ could enter the working places thanks to the cooperation with the employers' organisation.

The campaigns and flesh-mobs are important tools of the trade union action. The success of these campaigns depends not only on the importance of the topic to be supported but also on the originality of the campaign. Several interviewed persons reported successful on campaigns and mobilisations like May 1<sup>st</sup> by Night (MSZOSZ-SZISZ). In 31 April 2007 was first time organised the programme called May 1<sup>st</sup> by Night in Gödör Club, with the participation of near 6000 young people. In the event a poster exposition also took place: the young visitors became acquainted with 80 trade union posters from 1946 until present. In 2008 May 1<sup>st</sup> by Night was repeated in Petőfi hall.

*What are examples of successful activities to promote youth interests?*

*TU advocacy for the young*

Although there is no comprehensive youth strategy at any of the union confederations; we could come across with sporadic plans and targets: Liga raised the issue of housing, children day care, and Life Long Learning. MOSZ waged a successful campaign for higher wages for apprentice/internship work; finally this issue was submitted to the Parliament. Also MOSZ concluded an agreement with employers of student-workers.

*Training*

MSZOSZ-SZISZ launched its Trade Union Youth Academy in 2006. It included a series of accredited trade union officers' training. Later in 2009 it was inverted into a series of forums in four weekends in a year including interactive dialogues and debates on the present role of the trade union. In 2010 the Trade Union Youth Academy has launched again its series of trade union officers' training.

MOSZ emphasized on the successful programme of Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) on vocational training, which made clear the differences between German and the Hungarian dual vocational training which is promoted in Hungary by the chambers without any possibility for trade unions to interfere. In the program also the government was presented. A professional material was prepared to further utilisation of the results of the programme.

At spring 2014 SZISZ in collaboration with Friedrich Ebert Stiftung organised training for young trade union officers on the topic on community media. The 35 participants learnt about how to use and also how to not misuse the

community media. As a practice they created the Facebook page called 'Lájk-Ól' where the participants put different posts, and also launched a campaign in the net. They also prepared a short video of 44 seconds on the interest representation which was also put on the net. In the video every participant told a sentence about what the trade union serves and why is worth to enter.

### *Campaigns, flash mobs*

A good example is when ELMŰ organised flesh mob in the day of decent work. Also it was an interesting initiative by MSZOSZ-SZISZ to organise the event 'With music against black work'. It was organized at 20 June 2008 with the participation of 10 countries. In the framework of this informal programme the young people was informed also about the trade union movement. The fleshmob '6 corps in the Oktogon square' was organised in April 2014 by MSZOSZ-SZISZ in the city centre of Budapest, in Oktogon square as in 2013 53 workers died in Hungary in work due to workplace accident, from them 6 in Budapest



*Photo: 6 corps in the Oktogon square (MSZOSZ-SZISZ) fleshmob*

### *Protecting employees from dismissal*

Previously the leader of youth division of KASZ acted as shop steward in Auchan. She evaluated as a great success when she reached to protect as shop steward colleagues from dismissal by negotiating with the management.

*Relationship of trade unions and young people*

SZEFIT reported on a good relationship among SZEFIT and the ‘mother’ organisation, the SZEF, the atmosphere in SZEF is good and protective in concern of young people, it stimulates the rise of new generation of trade unionists. Also the youth division of ÉSZT evaluates that the trade union leaders have become more open and supportive towards them since their establishment.

*Supporting new generation of trade unionists*

In KASZ a so called mentor system is operating. It means that the young trade union officer has the right to go up to everybody (trade union leader) and ask.

*Relation of the confederation and sectors*

In Liga to design the targets of the confederation the problems are collected at sectoral level. Such topics are for example the nursery care of children after maternity leave, the subsidy to housing, the possibility to pay the school fee from cafeteria, etc.

## **8.2. What are the failures?**

*What are examples of unsuccessful youth membership campaigns or approaches and activities to promote youth interests?*

*The failures are caused first of all because of disinterest, the weak participation possibility or the lack of support. It would be the shop-stewards duty to recruit the new colleagues to the trade union but they do not do it with the needed impetus. Maybe sometimes they even don't know sufficiently the activity of the local youth division (Elmű). According to Liga the young persons are not often enthusiastic. For example meanwhile the employer supports training to acquire new skills; the young persons have to be strongly persuaded to do so. The regional presence of SZEFIT was not a success. It would be more successful if young trade unionists would cooperate with the regional representative of SZEF and they together would organise the programmes. But the problem is that a lot of young persons would like work actively in the SZEFIT but not in their own sectoral organisation. There are also other problems like there are difficulties in concern of mobilisation; no masses are present in the events (ÉSZT). The youth has weak voice within the organisation (VSZ). The cooperation among the*

confederations is weak, their joint action is impeded. This does not help the youth work. (MOSZ).

## **9. Final thoughts**

In a country with general distrust in institutions, apathy and weak union voice it is a sign of union rejuvenation that all confederations and many industry federations have already established its youth section (as a network of young activists.) However, despite of the wide range of activities, there has no considerable result in recruiting and maintaining young union members. Trade union hasn't yet a proper image; it doesn't draw in young people. Young people have not information on trade union in general and very frequently they don't know neither their workplace trade union activist. Shop stewards lack to invite young workers to trade union.

Surprisingly, none of the youth sections consider union organising a highlighted aim, they rather delegate this function to union centres or unionists at the workplace. Nonetheless, the youth sections' effort to make trade unions attractive for the young is a significant development. However, the main organisational function of youth sections remained recruiting, socializing and educating a new generation of union leaders.

As to the union centres, the study revealed the urgent need for comprehensive youth strategy, addressing youth issues in collective negotiation and social dialogue. No doubt, union advocacy is not an easy job in the lack of appropriate social dialogue forum (the existing National Youth Council is a voluntaristic information forum, it has no entitlement for consulting with the government) and there is no collective bargaining routines in the country that could take youth interest into account. Beyond the sporadic initiatives (about housing, children day care for working parents, wages for apprentices), there are many issues of importance for youth in which union centres should make their voice heard. For instance, the recent government "reforms" in the education system (decreasing compulsory schooling age, introduction of dual system of vocational training, cuts in universities, etc.) that fundamentally shapes the employment prospects of the next generations were initiated by the employers (more precisely by the Hungarian Chamber of Industry and Trade), but one could hardly heard any trade union response. Such union strategies are badly needed, even if they have no short-term reward in recruitment of young union membership.

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