



Young Workers

Purpose of brief:

- To inform EB-148 on PSI activities on young workers' issues.

Relates to:

- PoA sections 9.6 & 9.7.

Background: In recent years, a vast majority of countries has experienced a deterioration of the labour market with the continuous rise of unemployment, precarity and competition for decent jobs. This intense competition is now pushing vulnerable populations such as women, migrants and young people to accept worsened working conditions and/or lower wages, regardless of equity and sometimes decency. In this context, it is very important for the labour movement to stand up and collectively offset the global trend towards social, environmental and wage dumping. In the past two years, PSI has created and expanded its Young Workers' Network to provide a platform offering more space and visibility to their initiatives, ideas and actions. In the meantime, encouraging current union leadership to strengthen young leaders remains a PSI priority, in order to prepare for the future and guarantee the sustainability of the labour movement.

Discussion: In March 2015, PSI participated in a regional ETUI training workshop for young workers in Bucharest, Romania, and in a regional young workers' conference in Dubrovnik, Croatia, in May. In July, a PSI delegation including young workers participated in the GLI Summer School near Manchester, UK. On August 12th, the theme of the International Youth Day 2015 was "Youth Civic Engagement". In November, PSI held a subregional young workers' conference in Lomé, Togo, with the support of its Swedish affiliate ST to discuss young workers' issues in French-speaking Africa, present the role of QPS, anti-privatisation and tax justice campaigns and benefit from the experience of a young member from ST in successfully organising students. In December, PSI participated in COP21 in Paris to emphasise that public services have a key role to play in the solutions, to counter the overwhelming influence of corporations on the negotiations and explore the possibilities of further actions with allies from the civil society. Young workers are widely expected to join and get involved in this crucial issue. PSI currently has two projects dedicated to young workers. The first one is implemented in the Southern Cone, where young participants carried out a study on work casualisation, designed trade union materials and started to create national trade union schools for the subregion. The second project is implemented in South Africa and started in October 2015. During the planning meeting, three core areas of work were agreed: education/organising, campaign-building and research on the working conditions of young women in the public sector. Finally young workers' seminars were organised during the PSI regional conferences held in Gaborone, Botswana, and in Mexico City, where young workers could discuss PSI regional priorities from their own perspective, share experience and good practices, and make recommendations that were submitted to the plenaries of their respective regional conference.

Budget implications: 5,000€ allocated from equality budget.

Next steps: The Young Workers' Intervention Strategy will be implemented until next Congress.

It is recommended that EB-148:

1. **NOTE** this report and **APPROVE** the attached Young Workers' Strategy.

YES / NO

- **Related document:** PSI Young Workers' Strategy (attached).

PSI Young Workers' Strategy – 2016 – 2017

DRAFT (15/04/2016)

The First Step: Confronting the crisis

- ✚ *“43% of the global youth labour force is still either unemployed or working yet living in poverty.”*
- ✚ *“Between 2007 and 2014, global youth unemployment grew from 11.7% of all young workers to 13%.”*
- ✚ *“Between 1991 and 2014, the youth labour force participation rate (LFPR) declined by 11.7 percentage points (from 59.0 to 47.3%) compared to a 1 percentage point decline in the adult LFPR ... In terms of volume, the youth labour force decreased by 29.9 million over the period, while the youth population grew by 185 million.*

I) Overview

Any understanding of the position of young workers in the global economy today must acknowledge that the crisis exists. Even with regional variations, across the world young workers are confronted with stagnant or contracting labour markets, lack of access to education, training, and social services, low wages, insecure employment and limited or non-existent social protection. What little access young workers have to employment is often of a nature that offers little chance of progress or career. In some parts of the world, the only option that many young workers have is to leave their homelands and seek employment elsewhere, more often than not as undocumented migrants open to exploitation and abuse. With the increasing scarcity of stable employment and the mainstreaming of precarious work, a split in labour markets has been cemented with few, if any, bridges between the two. When demographic trends are placed alongside employment trends, the situation becomes grimmer: young worker populations are growing and far too many economies across the world have no capacity to absorb such growth.

With the onset of the global financial crisis, austerity policies and the pursuit of market liberalisation have only intensified these trends. The vast majority of the mechanisms designed to mitigate the effects of social and economic exclusion and guarantee access to basic social needs, such as water, housing and healthcare, are being rapidly dismantled. At a time where such public services are needed more than ever, the trajectory is in the opposite direction.

The core response in this situation is not just for states to deliver conditions of growth. This has been the global orthodoxy of the last 30 years – and continues to fuel the political approach to the present crisis as justification to wind back welfare protection, state ownership of utilities and the public provision of health, education and social services.

Furthermore, simply demanding “jobs” for young workers in an environment where transnational corporations pay no tax, where informal employment is growing worldwide, where labour laws are unimplemented or regarded as irrelevant, where trade unions are regularly repressed and where pay equity remains entrenched, is to consign young workers to a future with no opportunities. The political consequences are already visible – the rise of nationalist, irredentist, racist and xenophobic movements.

The only answer to the present and looming crises confronting young workers are trade union campaigns for state policies which radically transform domestic demand and employment conditions. A growing and expanding system of quality public services and public utilities, funded through a tax system built on justice, will not only deliver the public goods needed at present and in future, but will effectively contribute to absorb into productive employment a vast number of young workers in need of jobs with good conditions.

II) PSI strategy

For PSI, having 30% of young workers' representatives in its activities and projects remains very important, not only to strengthen the link between the current and future generations of union leaders, but also to allow young participants to bring fresh ideas and proposals to our movement. So in our view, confronting the crisis from a trade union perspective requires a cadre of young worker leaders who can take up the torch and breathe new life into QPS campaigns, contributing to their own struggle for a better future.

In order to promote the emergence of sharp-minded young activists and young trade union leaders within the affiliates, PSI emphasises the need for young workers' representatives to gain as much knowledge and experience as possible from training, improved mainstreaming and, of course, knowledge sharing with current leadership. It is by connecting the previous and the next generations that more young members will be able to build our political vision, develop capacity and obtain the skills to become an innovative source of strategy.

From theory to practice

Concretely, PSI proposes three focus areas for 2016-17 to strengthen its affiliates and the roles of young workers' representatives:

- Build knowledge of the policies and politics of regional and global labour movements;
- Deepen understanding of strategies for QPS campaigning (including trade, tax justice, alternatives to privatisation, gender equality, health) leading the way to an increased young workers' engagement in these campaigns;
- Develop trade union leadership skills.

Mainstreaming young leaders is important not only because of its potential snowball effect, but also because it will allow the new representatives to benefit from the present leaders' experience, to understand and influence the policy making process and propose new strategies, tactics and methods to develop political campaigns in the field.

Such good practice could be made even more efficient when paired with mentorship programmes. It would create a strong relationship between current and future leaders, replacing the atmosphere of inter-generational competition by one of trust, complementarity and respect.

PSI will also continue to expand its young workers' network through social media. Young members must make these communication tools their own; PSI staff will provide input and assistance but young members themselves must take possession of these spaces for them to work.

In the meantime, it is also important that young leaders dare to take actions of their own to acquire campaign and organising experience, to help mobilising new young members that are currently sorely missing, and to increase credibility and legitimacy for young leaders within the PSI community.

Furthermore, connecting our young members with our allies in civil society is a good way to foster collective action and build broader social movements.

PSI is also working to secure resources and support to build capacity and raise international awareness of young workers' representatives through workshops and training.

Bringing young workers into the heart of PSI

Following on from decisions at regional conferences since at least 2007, various debates and proposals have emerged on how to institutionalise young workers' representatives into PSI structures. From the perspective of the Secretariat, the most important question is what mechanisms will help PSI best achieve its objectives – *the form itself should not be the goal, but rather the outcome.*

Further efforts will be made to facilitate discussions on the political vision and policies to be debated during the next congress, which will set young workers' policy for 2018-22. The objective is to provide experiences and best practices that highlight the specific outcomes that PSI can achieve through a young workers' policy.

These outcomes could form the basis for the discussion and consequent decision of the affiliates during the next PSI Congress about the appropriate constitutional structure for young leaders.

The effort that PSI is making to match the PoA, the political objectives with the structures and resources needs to be taken into account also for the definition of the PSI Young Workers' Strategy.

Issues to be considered include:

1. The burden of costs for constitutional meetings on PSI budget;
2. Effectiveness of the young workers' structure in influencing PSI's decision-making process and mainstreaming young workers' policy;
3. Long term financial sustainability of the structure, even in the absence of external funding.

The secretariat also suggests the following options:

1. Expanding young workers' representation in the Executive Board from one per region to two per region (with gender balance);
2. Initiating a PSI young workers' "university" which would meet at least once every two years in each PSI region. The aim would be to introduce the key issues of the global labour movement, present the current struggles and campaigns led by PSI, and develop trade union skills. This "university" would also provide a space for debates and discussions about trade unions and the labour movement.

The advantage of this approach is that it would bring more young workers' representatives into the core decision-making bodies and that PSI would be able to supplement such activities with external support.