

SYLVIE CONTREPOIS  
London Metropolitan University

# Student workers: A new invisible proletariat? Evidence from the French case

## Introduction

Mobilising working students and defending their rights is still a challenge for worker's and student's trade unions. That is what we realised during a recent research project (PRECSTUDE) funded by the European Commission DG for Employment and Social Affairs, which sought to explore the forms and consequences of precariousness among students. One aspect of this project was concerned with trade union action towards working students. It appeared very modest in all countries studied<sup>1</sup>.

The number of students present in the labour market during their studies, to fund them or to gain work experience, tends to increase significantly as the duration of studies is growing. While Europe has nearly 20 million students, it has been estimated that over 40 per cent of them are already working. The students coming from families who have not yet had the experience of studying in higher education are the most likely to combine work and studies (Orr et al. 2011). In some sectors, such as merchant services, students represent a significant part of the workforce employed.

This article offers insight into specific issues related to student workforce employment rights and mobilisation. We will use the data gathered during the PRECSTUDE project in France (See methodology).

In the first section we will explore the factors that make working students particularly hard to access for trade unions. We will see that this particular labour force is very heterogeneous (Pinto 2010) and essentially used in the trade union deserts.

---

<sup>1</sup> The PRECSTUDE project during 18 months (2010–2012) involved partners from seven countries: the Czech Republic, France, Italy, Latvia, Poland, Spain, the UK. <http://www.workinglives.org/research-themes/precarious-work-amongst-students-in-europe-precstude.cfm>.

If students are clearly precarious workers, they mostly appear as if they were satisfied with their situation as we will see in the second section. They prove very reluctant to act and their main motivations turn to be outside of the workplace where they are only temporarily inserted. The position of trade unions vis-à-vis this labour force is therefore extremely difficult, ranging from rejection to feeble support, as we shall see in the third section.

## Methodology

The methodology of the research included a small number of semi-directive interviews (6–10) in each country and a questionnaire of about forty questions, translated in the six languages of the project, that students could complete online. Questions were aimed at exploring students' professional trajectories, their working conditions, the respect of employment law (work contract, wage, health and safety, working time), the articulation between work and studies and the propensity to report to trade unions and to unionise. The semi-directive interview schedule was exploring the same themes.

The French fieldwork was carried out in the Paris region, mostly around the University of Evry. This university is located in a new town, adjacent to a very old industrial area, where the population is relatively poor (Contrepois 2003, 2012). About 25 per cent of its students are working, among those 10 per cent are working full time. A lot of them are employed in big shopping malls around or in restaurants.

We advertised the survey at the university of Evry (posters, presentation to students, emails from the communication department) and through professional networks (French association of sociology, mailing lists from research units in diverse universities). About 190 students filled in the questionnaire online, 38 volunteered to be interviewed. Half a dozen students were selected to be interviewed on the basis of a set of criteria (year of study, work full time/part time, programme, occupation). The data from the questionnaire were analysed, along the data produced in five other countries, through SPSS by the coordinator of the project, the London Metropolitan University.

## Working students: A largely unknown population

The lack of information about the characteristics and specific needs of working students constitute an immediate obstacle to the inclusion of working students by student and workers trade unions. Indeed, if student surveys tend to multiply, most are aimed at understanding the articulation between studies and living conditions (Galland et al. 2011). When they are more focused on students' work, it is mainly to question the impact of work on the success of studies (Cohen-Scali

2004; Beffy et al. 2009). Except for the work of Vanessa Pinto (2009, 2014), in-depth research specifically dedicated to the content of students' professional activities and conditions of employment is extremely rare.

In the absence of a proper census of the working students population, the multiplicity of sources offers contrasting and even contradictory approaches, showing that their situations are extremely heterogeneous. However, they share two common features: they work primarily in merchant services and experience precarious work situations.

### Heterogeneous situations

The report submitted by Laurent Bérail to the National Economic and Social Council (2007) is one of the most comprehensive sources dedicated to the situation of working students in France. The author informs us in particular about the different statistical approaches and data and about the more or less restrictive variables they use in terms of age, employment status, working hours, and work situation continuity during the academic year. The results vary considerably from one source to another, the proportion of working students ranging from 16.9 per cent according to the National Institute for Statistics (INSEE) to 85 per cent according to the Centre for Studies on Employment and Qualifications (CEREQ). Finally, Laurent Bérail (2007, 9) estimates that three-quarters of students have to work. This is confirmed by another slightly older source: according to Ulrich (2002), nearly three quarters of students worked during their studies in 1990 against 70 per cent in the 1970s. The phenomenon would therefore be well on the increase.

The literature draws attention to the diversity of situations behind the figures. However, the proposed typologies vary considerably from one author to another. Bérail (2007) suggests to classify working students in three main groups, depending on their situation. He first distinguished those whose professional skills validation is a full part of their training, like medical students or teachers. These students are covered by a specific contract guaranteeing them an income level, defining a number of hours and their place at work as a student. Students have access to the same rights as permanent employees (paid holidays, sick and maternity leave). The second group consists of those whose initial training includes several internships, like master students, engineers and students of business schools. These are not considered employees, they remain covered by National Education rules that are locally implemented in a training agreement signed by themselves, their university and their employer. The third group, finally, consists of those who work independently of their training. In this case students are not covered by any specific rules. They are covered as other workers by the Labour Code and the collective agreements governing their profession. They are represented by the company employee representative bodies and may refer to the Labour Court in case of conflict.

Pauline Domingo (2005) was particularly interested in the latter group of students. Following an investigation she conducted at the University of Paris I, she evidenced its heterogeneity and distinguished mainly three subgroups. The first subgroup are the students who must work to meet all of their needs and to pay for their education. These students come mostly from the working classes and/or foreign countries. In some cases, they receive scholarships and housing allowances. Their salaries range from 350 to 700 euros per month. They are employed in unskilled tasks, tiring and demanding; their professional activity therefore often competes with their studies. These students are more likely to pursue their studies in the least elitist sectors (social sciences, humanities). The second subgroup consists of students who work with the aim of improving their living conditions. They live with their parents or are financially supported by them. They work to complete their resources and give priority to jobs that leave them time for their studies. They usually work less than half time or only during summers. The third subgroup is that of students who receive significant financial support from their family. They work to be able to afford their leisure and only agree to work regularly when the content of the job is related to their studies. Otherwise they prefer to move towards internships to develop their professional skills.

Vanessa Pinto (2009, 2010), finally, proposes a typology that could be considered cross-way to the previous two. Pointing to the fact that the type of jobs and the social use made of periods of work activities vary considerably according to the social background of students and their ambitions, it distinguishes three modes of articulation between employment and studies. The first is that of dissociation in which employment has nothing to do with the content of studies and clearly corresponds to a transitory situation. The second is the adjustment in which employment is chosen according to an anticipated career. And the third is that of substitution in which the job that was originally casual gradually becomes the only professional prospect of the student who eventually drops out.

It seems very difficult to clearly opt for one or the other of these typologies. The first has the undeniable merit to distinguish students employment status, while each of the other two highlights social inequalities that segment the student labour force and the diversity of individual strategies.

One of the main lessons from our survey is likely to have demonstrated the permeability of these categories. Thus, we could see how students move easily and frequently from an internship to a student job and vice versa. Moreover, they frequently begin their studies with a job aimed at covering some leisure expenses and often end their studies with a job covering all their needs. Along this path, it appears that the dissociation of the early times may possibly become a substitution.

### Labour force highly concentrated in merchant services

According to Bérail's report (2007, 20), student jobs are mainly concentrated in the service sector and virtually absent from industry and construction. Students who work are particularly present in the retail sector, in education, in hotels and restaurants. For example, 17.5 per cent of students have a job in the retail sector against 10.5 per cent of young workers aged under 30 and 6.5 per cent of the total labour force.

Our survey confirms this information while providing further insight into the size of companies employing students: a third of our respondents worked in large national or international companies; another third worked in the public sector and 21 per cent were from medium-sized companies (50–200 employees). They were mainly employed in cafés, restaurants and hotels (20 per cent), in education (17 per cent), in retail (23 per cent) and events (7 per cent).

Interviews conducted at the University of Evry and around allowed us to refine some data indicating that the largest employers of students were Evry mall, shopping areas nearby, restaurant chains like McDonald's, and National Education including the Evry University itself. Most of these companies or units, except from those of Education, are to be union deserts. The evidence we have collected on a number of occasions over the last few years with the local branch of the largest French confederation (Confédération Générale du Travail, CGT) testified to the difficulties in developing union settlements in the merchant sector. Barely formed, teams are decimated by the turnover that characterises the companies in this sector or by trade union repression.

### Work situations essentially precarious

The National Institute of Statistics (INSEE) measures job insecurity through the concept of "particular form of employment" that covers all types of non-permanent contracts: fixed-term contracts, temporary work, apprenticeship, specific measures of employment policy. INSEE admits that the use of this concept raises important theoretical and methodological problems. According to Perez and Thomas (2005, 111), "two dimensions of uncertainty must be distinguished .... First, job insecurity relates to the nature of the contractual relationship and its stability; secondly, insecurity is also related to individual representation of the employment relationship".

According to this perspective, precarious employment can be defined as a job offering low guarantees that do not achieve or maintain an acceptable standard of life for the individual. This type of employment generates uncertainty and a sense of insecurity. Beyond the specific atypical forms of employment, job insecurity can also be measured through the following indicators: part-time work, atypical working hours, low wages.

Based on all of these criteria, students appear well as precarious workforce. Thus, nearly 50 per cent of them hold a fixed-term contract against 18.8 per cent of young workers aged under 30 and 8.6 per cent of the entire workforce. Moreover, they are also more likely than the people of their age group to work part time and non-standard hours, evenings, Saturdays and Sundays. Schedules change from week to week in 30 per cent of cases.

If, overall, students say they chose these terms and conditions of employment (Bérail 2007, 24), the fact is that they make them more vulnerable than most workers, they affect the recognition of their work and they frequently deprive them of the benefit of collective rights that are available to permanent employees. Moreover, according to the representative of the National Union of Students of France (UNEF) we interviewed, students are frequently victims of non-compliance to the Labour Code by employers: extensive working hours for very low wages, unpaid overtime, unfair dismissals, non-observance of the requirements of health and safety.

The testimonies of our interviewees are particularly eloquent in this viewpoint. Laura, Master 1 student in Medieval History, working as a secondary school supervisor explains:

As students, we are not highly regarded. The teachers pay no attention to our work. When we knock on their door to pass information to pupils, it happens that some do not even open for us. Similarly, we are supposed to ensure that pupils follow the rules. But if there is any incident, we will be charged instead as they are protected. We are not properly supported in our work.

Her employment situation was even worse when she worked in a bar:

The bar was horrible. As a worker, I was not declared. We initially agreed with my employer that I would be paid 10 euros an hour, or 40 euros per half-day worked. But in the end, he decided to give me a meal and reduced my salary to 35 euros per half-day worked. Moreover, he has never given me my tips. But I never could claim anything, he used to reply that I was costing him too much. I felt guilty and I was afraid he would never call me back at work. It eventually happened and I was finally very happy to never return to that bar.

In general, the hotels, restaurants and bars sector is one for which we collected the worst testimonies. Anthony, Master student in Anthropology, holds a permanent part-time job as a cook at a restaurant in regional gastronomy. He says:

Working conditions are bad here. Some of my colleagues are doing more overtime than it is allowed in the Labour Code. Night work is not very well paid. We work in rooms that are not equipped with ventilation and where the heat is terrible. The employer was supposed to pay for the building work to be done, improve the situation in the kitchen but we are still waiting. The intensity of work is high, they never hire enough staff.

## Action against precariousness? Students' views

While it is clear that students are a precarious labour force, their precariousness is hardly comparable to that of other groups of employees, as it appears

to be closely related to a transitory situation whose outcome is known in principle. This can only lead to relativisation of the notion of collective rights in their consciousness.

### Precariousness: A banished word?

One of the most surprising findings of our research certainly lies in the answers that the students have provided to our question: “Would you describe your employment situation as precarious?”. In fact, all their responses tend to be “no” even though the students presented all the uncertainties and financial constraints under which they were struggling as a real obstacle to their lives.

Jeanne, an undergraduate student in her third year, employed as a tutor by her university and working in a recreation centre for disabled children during the school holidays:

Precariousness is not the word, although it is clear that my situation is full of uncertainty as long as I do not have a more stable student job, I cannot predict anything. I await a response from the university library. My situation is not the worst compared to that of other students. I even think I'm lucky because my position was quite comfortable for the past three years. It could become less comfortable now that I'm trying to become independent. I think it's very difficult to manage studies without the support of parents. The scholarships are not sufficient and housing is a real problem.

In different ways, the students describe as precarious a situation of extreme poverty, that leads to a total lack of choice and opportunity. None of them acknowledged themselves being in such a situation, although they have stated their own social and financial difficulties. In a context where the studies appear to be a necessity to access jobs or, more broadly, to live the life that interests them, students are more inclined to consider that they are lucky to find ways to afford their studies. This attitude is even clearer when they receive financial support from their families.

The relationship they entertain with their work is in all cases essentially instrumental, it is being assessed first against the free time it allows them to concentrate on their studies. The students we met appeared particularly sensitive to the fact that their employers let them choose their working hours. It emerged from the interviews that when this flexibility was challenged, this was the most frequent reason for resignation. Wages and working conditions come into consideration as a secondary issue, not that students are not concerned but they seem to accept the idea that their situation does not allow them to earn much money or to want to work in good conditions.

Neither job insecurity nor even less flexibility therefore appear to be challenged as such by students. During interviews, they stressed the considerable advantage that meant to them being able to work outside school hours and benefit, moreover, from a significant leeway in choosing their schedules. Similarly, the idea of

being hired on a fixed-term contract appears little disturbing since students have no ambition to settle in their occupation during their studies. They readily accept the idea of changing “jobs” repeatedly in their curriculum. As for wages, working conditions and potential benefits associated with the company, to them it is more specific data associated with the “job” they have “chosen” or “found” than parameters that they could change by their action.

#### A low propensity to turn to unions

Apart from a representative of the UNEF, none of the other students we met were unionised or had been in contact with trade unions, even in case of problems encountered in the workplace. The reasons they gave are very diverse: the weakness of trade unions in the industry in which they work; the difficulty of taking action in a context where the turnover is high; the feeling that their rights are respected and that they have no grounds to claim; the fact that they do not know any union representatives; the fear of anti-union repression; the fear of being manipulated; the lack of time to get involved in a student union.

Thus, Antoine who finds serious breaches of compliance with health and safety rules in the restaurant where he works prefers to stay back and envisages a change of job.

I am not in contact with any union, although my parents are unionised. I'm afraid that nothing will change in this restaurant, because of turnover. In any case, the unions are not very strong in the sector. They do not seem to be present in my business although it employs more than 50 employees. I've never been invited to participate in the elections of shop stewards for example. I never contacted the student union either. But I feel more as an employee than as a student.

Demonstrating a degree of political and social consciousness — he said earlier that he had adopted a lifestyle not dictated by the imperatives of the consumer society, he knows the rules of representation of staff and those on hygiene and safety — Antoine does not intend to initiate any action against his employer in a context where unions are absent. Such action would imply, in fact, him to create a union branch since none seems to exist within the company. This appears to be too ambitious a task as he does not plan to build his career in the restaurant. Student unions appear to him, moreover, far from his young worker concerns.

The situation is somewhat different for Jeanne and Laura, since both work in sectors where trade unions operate. Jeanne indicates that she participates in meetings of the Left Party (Parti de Gauche), but when it comes to trade unions, she explained: “I've never seen any. I have never tried to contact neither because I never felt that my rights were not respected”. Laura grew up in an environment of political activists. Her first inclination was to contact the teacher's trade unions when she encountered problems in renewing her contract. But she was immediately dissuaded by her colleagues:



I wanted to contact a teacher trade union, but I do not know any representative. And when I talked to colleagues, they were very sceptic, saying that my contract might not be renewed. So I did nothing for the moment.

Overall, students seem open to the idea of contacting trade union representatives, but they rarely have an opportunity to do so. However, the idea of engaging in an active approach to defending their rights when appropriate is difficult to implement. Their lack of experience and the fact that they do not see themselves as an integral part of the professional environment in which they operate are certainly two important reasons.

Furthermore, comparing these small portions of interview quoted above with the rest of the presentation of their student trajectory, one can easily understand that the whole context in which they operate makes it particularly difficult to envisage any commitment. Between the time of the studies, that of work and that of travel to work, students are finally left with little space to develop any social life. The amplitude of their days reached easily more than a dozen hours. None of the students we interviewed is able to participate in events organised by the university for students, or even to go out with friends. This situation does not favour the development of student sociability among those who work and so it is not surprising that they are not members of student unions.

The secretary of the local CGT trade union emphasises the gap between permanent employees and working students. Even when they are unionised, it is very unlikely that they begin to be active in their business,

There really is a gap between them and permanent employees. Staff and their trade unions ignore students. During the surgeries that we held at the University of Evry, some students have become members of the CGT. They were generally already activists at the UNEF. What surprised me about them is that they were not active at all in companies while they were at university. It was a bit like saying “Wait guys, I’m going to work and will come back later in the fight!”

If being in the labour market appears to be unavoidable for a growing number of students, it will certainly not be the place for them for any protest expression. At least until they have the ambition to settle there, if we believe Vakaloulis’s (2003) observations. Analysing 20 interviews with young graduate members of the CGT, he notes that unionising is a way for young people to assert themselves as actors of the company. It is a way of defending it, as the work community that has a social utility through providing service to a customer or to citizens.

### Union strategies evolve slowly

Cooperation developed as soon as 1945 between student organisations and workers trade unions, mainly the CGT and the UNEF, was aimed at preventing students from working by developing a system of support for these young “intellectuals” workers (Vila 2013). It is in this dynamics that student social security was

created in 1948, but the French government did not go further and awarding of scholarships remained essentially limited to social criteria; the amount of awards under no circumstances allowed their holders to live.

A little later, trade unions have focused on internships for which they claimed the regulations explicitly restricting their scope to a learning dimension. An initial agreement on internships was signed between the UNEF and the CGT in 1972; the second one was signed in 1994. Both organisations have finally developed a joint action that led to the new law on internships in 2014.

Students whose professional activity is not related to their studies receive, however, very little attention. In addition to the highly heterogeneous nature of this public, the fact that institutions and governments ignore them and the persisting denunciation of the obligation to work by student trade unions are certainly reasons for this situation.

#### Working students: A population that is attracting a recent interest

The French Government had largely ignored the situation of working students up until the late 1980s. In 1989, however, an observatory of student life was created under the leadership of the Ministry of Education. The statistical studies it conducts every three years, from a large sample of 25,000 respondents, have become an indispensable source of knowledge on the conditions of life for students.

In 2005, the city council of Paris initiated a charter for the success of working students. This initiative has some resonance in the world of higher education. The charter was signed by eight universities and hundreds of companies including Adia, Carrefour, McDonald's, Monoprix, Quick, Acadomia, Domicours, RATP, FNAC and Synhorcat (national union of hotels, restaurants, cafés and catering). On the one hand, the companies are committed to providing students with work schedules consistent with their studies. On the other, universities undertake to adapt their schedules and their organisation (online courses) to facilitate articulation between school and work.

But it was only with the law "on the freedoms and responsibilities of universities" (LRU) of 2007 that the Government really began to consider this population. Its aim was to encourage a professional student route, insertion becoming one of the three missions of universities. This law has opened to university authorities the ability to recruit students to perform in hosting tasks, in support of library staff and in computer support. Moreover, the law "in favour of labour, employment and purchasing power" of 2007 has exempted student wages from taxes and has excluded them from the calculation of scholarships and housing grants. Finally, some efforts to improve the knowledge on the student work were undertaken by the Economic and Social Council with the Bérail's report (2007).

As we can see, the French Government policy is not aimed at stopping the development of student work but rather at articulating to the changing content of higher education.

To inform students about their rights

CFDT (*La Confédération française démocratique du travail*) had somehow anticipated these legislative developments by developing a project in 1990, “l'ouvre-boîte” (*the tin opener*) that was designed to facilitate student access to businesses. Also in this line, it supports the new Student Confederation created in 2003 in the publication of a guide to seasonal employment (2004).

The National Union of Students of France (*L'Union nationale des étudiants de France*, UNEF) is in a different line. In the late 2000s, the student trade union published in cooperation with some workers confederations (CGT, *Force ouvrière* [FO], Unitaires, *L'Union nationale des syndicats autonomes* [UNSA] and the student mutual aid, *La Maison des Étudiants* [LMDE]) a guide to labour law aimed at students. This guide presents also the UNEF set of demands.

One of the main demands is the creation of an “autonomy allowance” instead of the current system of scholarships, based on social criteria. According to the UNEF, the system has become archaic in several respects. It does not guarantee a decent income and only a small number of students benefit from it. In addition, this system takes into account parental income and ignores the need for independence of students. The allocation of autonomy claimed by the UNEF is thought to be universal. The amount is to be based on individual and social situation of the student. It must be sufficient to allow the students to continue their studies without having to work.

Beyond this national campaign, the Evry local CGT and the UNEF have initiated trade union surgeries within the university. This was mainly aimed at informing students about their rights as workers and at supporting them in case of conflict with their employer. These surgeries were more or less regular depending on the time and activists available but the two trade unions have welcomed their usefulness. The surgeries have, in fact, allowed to approach a diverse student audience, often interested in learning about their rights.

A growing number of working students question the traditional scope of student trade unions. The problem is not only to represent them in front of academic institutions, but also to defend their rights in the labour market as a workforce with special needs.

For workers trade unions, the challenge of addressing this category of workers as such is twofold. The first reason is to try to stop the deterioration of working conditions in sectors that are already characterised by weak employee rights. The student workforce is often used for hard jobs and under conditions deemed not acceptable by permanent employees. It is also much more vulnerable since its position in the labour market is primarily defined by the need to acquire the “door opener” to employment: a diploma and professional experience.

The second reason for trade unions to target this particular workforce is related to the improvement of their own representational capacity. The latter can only occur through gaining membership within age groups, professional environments and areas where they are traditionally not present. The difficulty to organise the

younger generation remains a well-known anthem, just as it is difficult for older worker trade unions to penetrate the milieu of graduate employees or the merchant services sector (Contrepois 2014).

## Conclusion

The student workforce will become more and more numerous in a context where the government seeks to professionalise the higher education. It nevertheless remains at the margins of work, heavily concentrated in precarious jobs in merchant services.

Largely inaccessible to the workers trade unions because they are working in union deserts, students have little reason to mobilise. They perceive their precariousness as a given intimately related to the provisional status of student, they willingly accept the flexibility of working hours and do not denounce their employment conditions, be they the worst. For the most, dissatisfaction can result in resignation.

The docility of student workforce, noted by other observers (Pinto 2010), does not mean that students have no social conscience. Constraints that are weighing on their empowerment as young adults are particularly strong, and leave little room for sociability either with peers or with other categories of employees.

Although modest, the joint initiative of the UNEF and the CGT to hold trade union surgeries at the university seems to be an important step towards mobilising students. This initiative is unfortunately weak, mainly dependent on the trade union forces available.

## References

- Beffy, M., D. Fougère, and A. Maurel. 2009. "L'impact du travail salarié des étudiants sur la réussite et la poursuite des études universitaires." *Economie et statistiques* 422: 31–50.
- Bérail, L. 2007. *Le travail des étudiants. Rapport au Conseil Economique et social*. La documentation française. Available at: [www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/.../2007\\_25\\_%20laurent\\_berail.pdf](http://www.lecese.fr/sites/default/files/pdf/.../2007_25_%20laurent_berail.pdf).
- Bérourd, S., and P. Bouffartigue (eds.). 2009. "Quand le travail se précarise, quelles résistances collectives?" *La dispute*.
- Bordigoni, M., and J.-F. Vergnies. 1997. "Etudiants salariés. Quand la vie professionnelle commence avant la fin des études." *Cereq Bref* 132 (June).
- Clark, N. 2013. *Precarious work amongst students in Europe (PRECASTUDE). A seven country study. Synthesis Report*. London: Working Lives Research Institute.
- Cohen-Scali, S.V. 2004. "Travailler en étudiant. Les enjeux pour l'insertion professionnelle, CREDOC." *Cahier de Recherche* 199 (July).
- Collectif, P. 2011. *l'Étude des Conditions de travail dans la Recherche et l'Enseignement Supérieur (P.É.C.R.E.S.), RECHERCHE PRÉCARISÉE, RECHERCHE ATOMISÉE, Raisons d'agir*.
- Contrepois, S. 2003. *Syndicats, la nouvelle donne. Enquête sociologique au cœur d'un bassin industriel*. Paris: Syllepse.
- Contrepois, S. 2012. "Transformations of the labour force of the Evry-Corbeil Region (France)." In *Restructuring Class and Gender. Six Case Studies*, ed. K. Wódz, and M. Gnieciak. Kraków: ZW Nomos.

- Contrepois, S. 2014. "Mobilised but not unionised? Analysis of the relationships between youth and trade unionism in France." In *Youth and Trade Unions in Europe*, ed. L. Kretsos, and A. Hodder. Palgrave Macmillan, 90–106.
- Domingo, P., C. Firmin, and J. Cicchini. 2005. *Les activités rémunérées des étudiants de l'Université Paris I: entre logique financière et professionnelle, résultat d'une enquête qualitative exploratoire*, rapport de recherche pour l'Observatoire des résultats de Paris I, July.
- Erlich, V. 1998. *Les nouveaux étudiants*. Paris: Armand Colin.
- Galland, O., E. Verley, and R. Vourc'h. 2011. *Les mondes étudiants. Enquête Conditions de vie 2010*. Observatoire national de la vie étudiante, La documentation française.
- Orr, D., Ch. Gwosd, N. Netz. 2011. *Social and Economic Conditions of Student Life in Europe*, research report. Available at: [http://www.eurostudent.eu/download\\_files/documents/EIV\\_Synopsis\\_of\\_Indicators.pdf](http://www.eurostudent.eu/download_files/documents/EIV_Synopsis_of_Indicators.pdf). Accessed January 23, 2012.
- Perez, C., and G. Thomas. 2005. "Trajectoires d'emplois précaires et formation continue." *Economie et Statistiques* 388–389: 107–127.
- Pinto, V. 2009. *L'emploi étudiant. Apprentissages du salariat*, PhD dissertation in sociology, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS), Paris.
- Pinto, V. 2010. "L'emploi étudiant et les inégalités sociales dans l'enseignement supérieur." *Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales* 183: 58–71.
- Pinto, V. 2014. *À l'école du salariat. Les étudiants et leurs "petits boulots"*. PUF, collection "Le Lien social".
- Ulrich, V. 2002. "Travail d'appoint, travail régulier ou études à temps complet." *Informations sociales*, 99.
- Vakaloulis, M. 2013. *Précarisés, pas démotivés! Les jeunes, le travail, l'engagement*. Paris: Les Editions de l'Atelier.
- Vila, R. 2013. "Le salariat étudiant: zone grise du syndicalisme français?" In *Être gouverné au XXIe siècle*, ed. C. Gobin, G. Matagne, M. Reuchamps, and V. Ingelgom. Academia L'Harmattan, collection "Science politique" 16: 245–265.

## Student workers: A new invisible proletariat? Evidence from the French case

### Abstract

The number of students present in the labour market tends to increase significantly as the duration of studies is growing. This article offers insight into specific issues related to student workforce employment rights and mobilisation. Using the data gathered in France during an EU funded research project, it reveals that students have a very specific approach to their work precariousness. Their main motivations turn to be outside of the workplace where they are only temporarily inserted and they prove very reluctant to act to improve their working conditions. Trade unions attitudes towards them vary from rejection to feeble support.

## Pracujący studenci: nowy niewidoczny proletariat? Przypadek Francji

### Abstrakt

Liczba studentów obecnych na rynku pracy znacznie rośnie, ponieważ czas trwania studiów wydłuża się. Niniejszy artykuł oferuje wgląd w określone kwestie związane z prawami pracowniczymi studentów i ich mobilizacją. Wykorzystując dane zebrane we Francji w trakcie projektu badawczego

finansowanego ze środków UE, niniejsza praca pokazuje, że studenci mają bardzo specyficzne podejście do niepewności swojej pracy. Okazuje się, że ich główne motywacje pozostają poza miejscem pracy, w którym znajdują się tylko tymczasowo, oraz że są bardzo niechętni działaniu w celu poprawy swoich warunków pracy. Postawy związków zawodowych wobec nich różnią się — od odrzucenia do słabego wsparcia.