



**ECOSOC:** Economic and Social

**Student Officer:** Cenker Camcı

**Issue:** Tackling job insecurity and precarity in economies with high underemployment rates

**TIMUN '19**

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Committee: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)  
 Issue: Tackling job insecurity and precarity in economies with high underemployment rates  
 Student Officer: Cenker Camcı - Deputy Chair

Rank ↕	Country/Territory ↕	Chance of losing job in 2012 <sup>[citation needed]</sup> ↕
1	Switzerland	2.8%
2	Japan	2.9%
2	Norway	2.9%
4	South Korea	3.0%
5	Germany	3.2%
6	Austria	3.4%
7	Netherlands	3.6%
8	Luxembourg	4.0%
8	Russia	4.0%
10	Czech Republic	4.2%
11	Iceland	4.3%
12	Australia	4.4%
13	Belgium	4.5%
14	Mexico	4.7%
14	Chile	4.7%
16	Brazil	4.8%
17	Slovenia	5.0%
18	Estonia	5.3%
19	Italy	5.5%
20	United Kingdom	5.6%
21	Slovakia	5.8%
21	New Zealand	5.8%
21	Denmark	5.8%
24	United States	6.3%
25	Ireland	6.4%
25	Finland	6.4%
27	Israel	6.5%
27	Sweden	6.5%
27	France	6.5%
30	Canada	6.6%
31	Hungary	6.7%
32	Poland	7.3%
33	Turkey	7.8%
34	Portugal	9.1%
35	Greece	12.0%
36	Spain	17.7%

Figure 1: Rates of job insecurity in OECD member states.  
Source: Wikipedia

## I. Introduction

Job insecurity and precarity are two of the most prevalent problems in the workplace, especially in economies with high underemployment rates. In order to understand the reasons behind that, one must understand the difference between unemployment and underemployment. Unemployment is the situation in which the person is not employed for a certain job at all. On the other hand, underemployment is the situation in which the person is employed, but in a job that does not use all of his/her abilities or requires fewer hours of work than wanted. In other words, if someone's skills exceed the requirements of the job or if he/she is working part-time but wants to work full-time, that person is considered to be underemployed. Unemployment and underemployment rates are independent of each other. In fact, underemployment is mostly prevalent in developing countries where unemployment rates are not that high.

Underemployment is mostly prevalent in the younger generation as they are stepping into competitive economies with limited job opportunities in their respected fields. In other words, with many students graduating each year from college, the supply of employees exceeds the need and graduates who struggle to find jobs in their respected fields usually get employed in areas that do not allow them to work up to their potential. Another case in which underemployment rises is when the credentials of immigrants who are specialized in a field are not recognized in their host country, which disregards their skills and prevents them from finding jobs accordingly.



Currently, job insecurity and precarity are a threat to many employees. With advancing technologies and globalization, jobs are disappearing and automation is taking the place of manpower. On top of that, in economies with high underemployment rates, employees are dependent on their employers more than average. In such cases, unions come into effect as they are trying to provide and reflect the collective interest of workers. When workers find themselves in an unfavorable situation but also have the chance of losing their job if this situation expressed, unions are a way of ensuring the collective interest of workers is ensured, such as work hours, wages, etc. Since demand for full-time jobs is extremely high in such economies, employers can easily find new employees to replace the already existing ones which put pressure on the employees. In addition, in such economies, wages are lower and working conditions are more severe. However, in economies with low underemployment rates, employers are more dependent on their employees and they value their already existing employees which improve job security significantly.

In accordance with “Civil Society, Trust, and Democracy”, tackling job insecurity and precarity in economies with high underemployment rates is an issue that aims to foster trust between the citizens and employers, as well as the government. By tackling this issue and preserving their citizens’ status of employment as well as the source of income, nations can strengthen their democracy and establish stronger relations with the civil society while improving their economy.

## II. Involved Countries and Organizations

### International Labour Organization (ILO)

International Labour Organization (ILO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations which focuses on the rights of employees as well as the quality of the labor. Unlike any other United Nations agencies, ILO runs a system called “tripartite”, which means composed of three parts. Through this system, ILO brings together and establishes connections between the employees, employers, and governments while preserving their individual rights as well. Their duties and goals are parallel with the objective of tackling job insecurity and precarity in economies with high underemployment rates. As ILO communicates and works in cooperation with governments, solutions regarding policymaking can be applicable with its support as an agency of the United Nations.



Figure 2: Logo of ILO.



## Spain

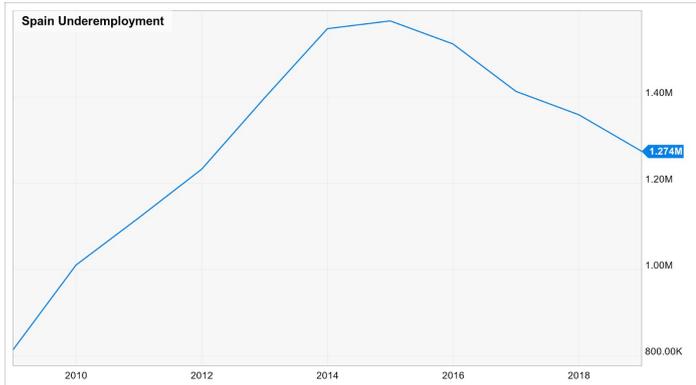


Figure 3: Graph showing the underemployment rate of Spain through the years 2007 to 2019.

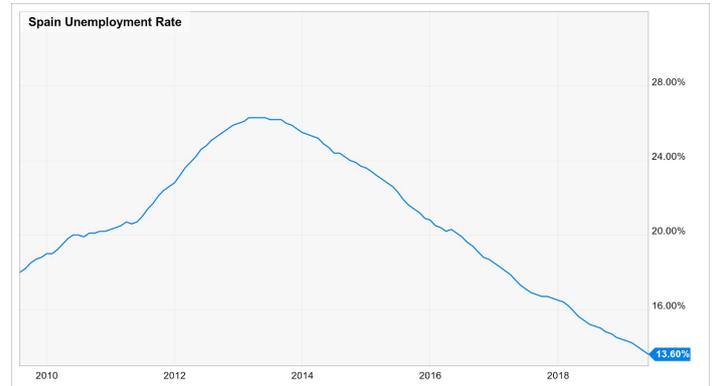
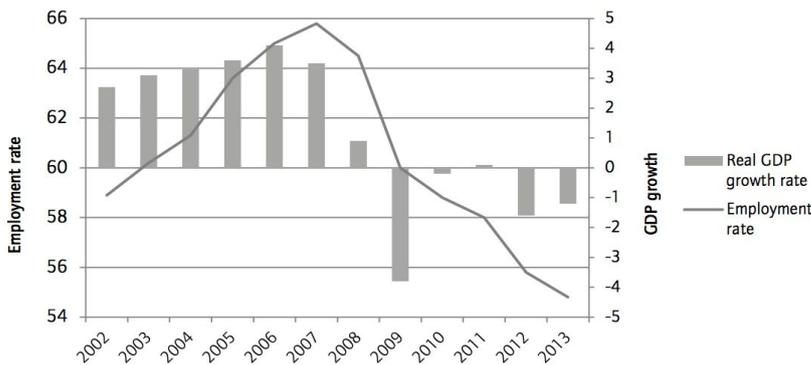


Figure 4: Graph showing the unemployment rate of Spain through the years 2007 to 2019.

After the global economic crisis, Spain had to deal with an outbreak of unemployment. As a solution, the worker protections were weakened and precarious jobs were created with the aim of creating new jobs and decreasing unemployment (Bershidsky). Labour unions naturally generated their responses with the aim of increasing job security, however, the post-crisis environment in the country did not allow such a huge response as the unemployment rate was seen to be the first order of business. As can be seen from the top graph on the left, these changes in labor regulations drastically increased the rate of underemployment in Spain and it has not dwindled back to pre-crisis levels ever since. In Spain, unemployment and underemployment hold an inversely proportional relationship as underemployment increased while unemployment decreased.

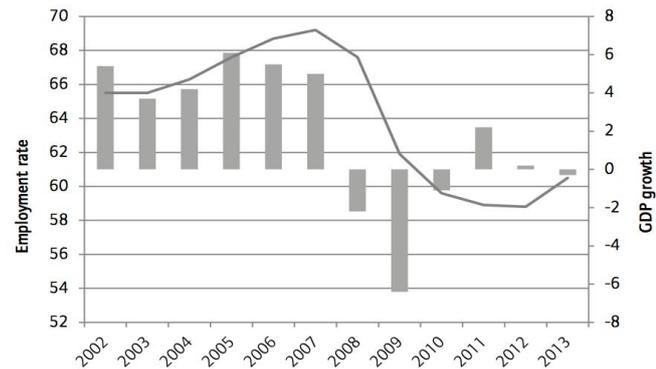
Figure 1 GDP growth and employment rate in Spain



Source: Eurostat (ifsi\_emp\_a; tec00115), own calculations.

Figure 5: Graph showing the GDP growth and employment rate in Spain from 2002 to 2013.

Figure 2 GDP growth and employment rate in Ireland



Source: Eurostat (ifsi\_emp\_a; tec00115), own calculations.

Figure 6: Graph showing the GDP growth and unemployment rate of Ireland through the years 2002 to 2013

Even though the country is currently witnessing record-low unemployment rates, the underemployment rates and the precarious jobs that were created after the global economic crisis continue to affect Spain's economy in a negative way. However, in Ireland, a country that was affected by the crisis like Spain managed to recover its employment rate, unlike Spain. The main reason as to why such a drastic difference



occurred is the different approaches used. While Spain tried to decrease unemployment via precarious jobs, Ireland implemented a program called EMU (Economic and Monetary Union) Adjustment Programme and mostly focused on the regulations of expenses.

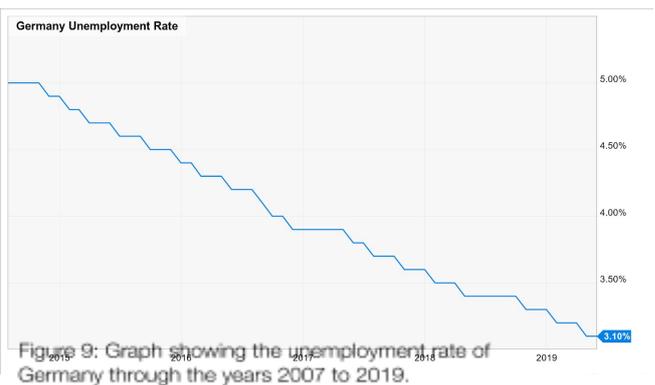
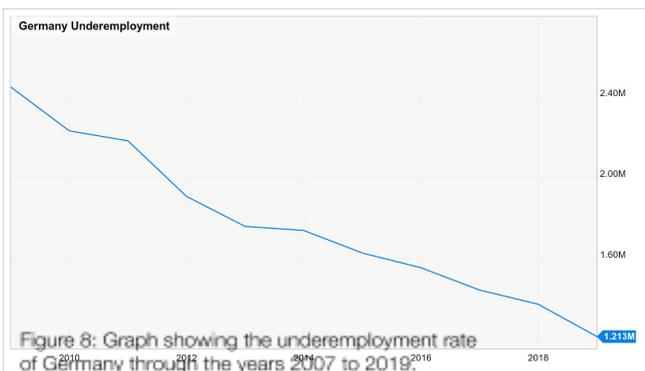
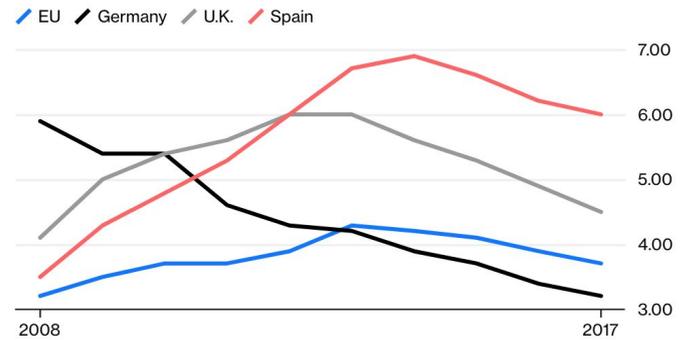
## Germany

As most of the European countries did, Germany was also negatively affected by the Global Economic Crisis. In fact, as the graph on the right suggests, Germany was one of the most affected countries with a drastic increase in the rates of underemployment. However, the country managed to reduce the rates of underemployment to pre-crisis years, unlike many other economies in the region. In fact, the unemployment and underemployment rates are both so low in Germany right now that it concerns

employers. They worry about the number of available employees and the increasing amounts of salaries. This situation proves that underemployment causes job insecurity and precarity as in economies with low underemployment rates, such as Germany, work quality and wages are significantly better while jobs are much more secure. In that regard, Germany stands as an example to countries that are aiming to decrease the underemployment as well as unemployment rates since Germany managed to decrease them both.

### Hiding Unemployment

The evolution of underemployment in selected European economies



## India

India is a country suffering from high underemployment rates, while unemployment rates are extremely high too. The government is creating more precarious jobs while ignoring underemployment with the aim of decreasing the rate of unemployment. However, underemployment is as serious as unemployment in India. National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog, the “think tank” of the government of India,



previously stated that “Indeed, unemployment is the lesser of India’s problems. The more serious problem, instead, is severe underemployment,” (Singh). The main problem in India stems from the contradictions between the views of organizations like NITI Aayog and India’s prime minister, Narendra Modi. A newspaper article even stated that Modi cannot possibly deal with the problem of underemployment as in order to solve it, he needs to recognize the problem, to begin with. Before being elected, Modi promised that he would provide his citizens with high-quality jobs and would decrease the rate of unemployment which drastically helped him in the election process. However, he has been criticized for his opinions on this regard as well as his implementation ever since he got elected. His promise of good days fell short in terms of jobs. This situation was a surprising one as the initial promise of the Modi government was to establish a strong economy through job creation and received criticism from the public as well as the opposing political party Indian National Congress (INC). As solutions for underemployment should start with policy-making, the support of the prime minister of a country is crucial in order to decrease the rates of underemployment, just like unemployment. Unlike Spain, India experienced a directly proportional relationship between its underemployment and unemployment rates. As the unemployment rates increased, a limited number of jobs were thrived, which led people to take on jobs that did not allow them to live up to their potential, both in terms of skill and working hours. These different ways of relationship between underemployment and unemployment in different countries, as seen in India and Spain, highlight the relativity of this relationship and the specificity of the problem in each country.

### III. Focused Overview of the Issue

#### 1. Causes of Underemployment

There are multiple possible reasons for an increase in underemployment rates of a country. The most simple cause is the situation in which the number of workers is more than what is needed. In other words, underemployment rates go up when the supply of workers exceeds the demand. In these cases, it is extremely hard to find available jobs that correspond to one’s abilities which puts individuals in a position in which they thrive to get any job they can.

Globalization and technological advancements also cause the rising of underemployment rates. As some jobs and fields are beginning to be dominated by technology such as artificial intelligence or machinery, the need for manpower decreases along with the number of available jobs. For instance, after the Industrial Revolution, most of the products that were being produced by hand started being produced by machines. A more specific example of technology taking over jobs would be the ATMs as well as the online banking platforms. They are extremely dominant in banking nowadays and decrease the need for bank clerks as well as the job opportunities for finance majors.



## 2. Problems That Occur Due To Underemployment

There are numerous problems that occur due to underemployment, the most important one of them being its effect on the national economy. In cases of underemployment, employees gain less money as they either work part-time or cannot put all their skills into practice. In economies with high underemployment rates, the amount of employees who do not gain adequate salaries is extremely high. As individuals gain less money and in some cases struggle to afford their basic needs, overall spendings and the demand for certain services/products naturally decrease. This decrease in demand slows the businesses down and affects the economy of the nation in a negative way. This is why underemployment is seen to be one of the most evident reasons for poverty in economies with high rates of underemployment, resulting in a lower Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Another problem of underemployment is the fact that individuals start to lose their knowledge in a particular field when they are not putting it into use. When people are underemployed in a job that does not fully allow them to use their abilities, those skills may even be lost over time which would prevent them from returning to their original field after a certain time. In other words, underemployment can overshadow and blunt one's abilities as well as education. Even if they maintain their skills and knowledge during underemployment, they are deprived of the necessary experience in their respected fields. If underemployment rates are rising in an economy due to recession after the recession is over, underemployed individuals would lack the most fundamental quality, experience, that would distinguish them from newly graduated students in their fields. Since they won't have this experience, they would be competing with newly graduated students for the limited job opportunities which is an aspect of underemployment that affects the employees in the long-term. In addition to those mentioned above, underemployment also has psychological impacts on individuals. Extreme stress and anxiety are products of situations in which they cannot pay for their basic needs and bills. Moreover, these psychological issues may arise as a result of the employees' comparisons of their current status versus individuals' who had the same education as they did.

## 3. Current Economic Context

After the Global Economic Crisis during the years 2007-2008, also known as the Great Recession, many countries struggled to pull their economies back together. Collapsing of businesses, bankruptcies and trade deficits were some of the outcomes of the crisis that damaged the global economy. The effects were very significant as some countries still haven't managed to recover. With the aim of reviving the economy, some nations relaxed the labor regulations while others created precarious jobs to decrease the rate of unemployment (Bershidsky). However, while these



precarious jobs and relaxed labor regulations decreased the rate of unemployment, they gave rise to the rate of underemployment and provoked the concerns regarding job insecurity. That is why, when politicians brag about the way they reduced the unemployment rates and that their countries' employment rates are the highest they have ever been, they are ignoring the other half of the problem.

#### 4. Why are jobs insecure?

Technological advancements, automatization, and economic reforms are the continuous changes in the way the economy is pursued. With these changes, the economy and how it is seen changes as well, making companies obliged to follow up with these changes by showing them as the key to success. With the addition of the types of demand of the current era, companies constantly make changes in their structures, procedures, and products while always keeping their goal the same, which is to make more money. This goal requires companies to make regulations and adjustments to the way they function so that they can keep up with the current trends and be competitive in their respected fields. These aforementioned labor force adjustments are mostly achieved by staff recruitments and staff reductions, depending on the need. In economies with high underemployment rates, whether the company is recruiting or reducing staff, the jobs are constantly insecure. The reason for that is when underemployment rates are high, jobs become more valuable and the competitiveness for them increases. However, companies acknowledge these objectives and begin to reduce salaries and offer less convenient working conditions, do whatever they can to reduce their spendings in general. When they do so, the situation of the economy with high underemployment rates prevents employees from leaving their jobs as the competitive nature of the market cannot ensure that they can find new full-time jobs, especially when there are many other underemployed individuals looking for a full-time job. With these objectives, companies create insecure and precarious jobs that they can make adjustments whenever they want to reduce their spendings and governments support them to reduce the unemployment rates.

#### 5. Sustainable Development Goal 8

## 8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Sustainable Development Goals, also known as SDGs, are the 17 goals that were set by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in 2015 in order to overcome the most significant struggles that our world is facing nowadays. They hold essential importance as to how the world can improve itself and diminish the difficulties it has been experiencing for many years. It represents a step forward and establishes the



picture of a better future for the planet we are living on and its residents. In order for these goals to serve its purpose properly, every country has to take them into consideration and do their best to complete that goal in the given time limit. Tackling job insecurity and precarity is an issue that intersects with the Sustainable Development Goal 8 as underemployment directly contradicts with the notion decent work and economic growth is only possible if problems regarding underemployment are solved.

Decent work is the work that has proper conditions and provides an individual the amount of money enough to afford his/her fundamental needs. In cases of underemployment, poverty is the most common outcome and such jobs do not always qualify as “decent work”. Moreover, if an economy has a high underemployment rate, even though the unemployment rate decreases, it cannot grow significantly as wished. In fact, that country’s GDP is most likely to stay the same, if not decrease when underemployment rates are high. As mentioned above, after a great recession, numerous countries decreased the unemployment rates while underemployment rates were increasing which slowed down the wage growth as well as economic growth.

## IV. Key Vocabulary

**Visible underemployment:** Visible underemployment is the type of underemployment that can be monitored and quantified easily. It mostly consists of people who are not working as many hours as they wish to and part-time employees. This type of underemployment can be monitored more easily than invisible underemployment as it is easier to obtain data when the problem revolves around the amount of time, a quantifiable measure.

**Invisible underemployment:** Invisible underemployment is the type of underemployment that is hard to observe and record. It usually consists of individuals whose skills are underutilized in their jobs. This type of underemployment is hard to document as it is concerning skills and abilities, making it hard to quantify and thus, invisible.

**Gross Domestic Product (GDP):** GDP is the measure of a country’s economic strength. It takes the goods and services produced in a country into account and reflects the economic performance of a country. Moreover, economists use this information to assess a country’s economy, write reports and give advice.

**Job Security:** Job security is one’s ability to maintain a job over a period of time. Likewise, job insecurity refers to the inability to hold a job for a long time. In other words, if an individual is obliged to switch jobs constantly and cannot hold one single job, his/her jobs are insecure.



**Precarious Job:** A precarious job is a job that requires the commitment of a permanent job but denies the rights of a permanent worker. These jobs deprive workers of their basic rights, social advantages, and adequate salaries.

**Recession:** It is a time period in which the economy of a nation, or the world as a whole, is extremely struggling. During recessions, the increasing rate of countries' Gross Domestic Product faces negative values which makes countries take extreme measures. Job opportunities are highly limited and unemployment rates drastically increase during times of recession.

**Wage:** The amount of money one earns on a regular basis from a job.

## V. Important Events & Chronology

Date (Day/Month/Year)	Event
1919	International Labour Organization was established.
20/04/1925- 25/04/1925	2nd International Conference of Labour Statisticians was held in which underemployment was recognized for the first time.
24/04/1957-03/05/1957	9th International Conference of Labour Statisticians was held in which the first definition of underemployment was adopted.
12/2007	The global economic crisis started.
15/09/2008	Lehman Brothers, a global investment banking company, bankrupted and accelerated the effects of the global economic crisis significantly.
07/2009	The global economic crisis officially ended according to the U.S. National Bureau of Economic Research.

## VI. Past Resolutions and Treaties

- [Promoting full employment and decent work for all, 2008, \(E/RES/2008/18\)](#)

This is a previous ECOSOC resolution in which topics of full employment in opposition to underemployment, decent work conditions, job insecurity, and precarious labor are tackled.



- [Resolution concerning statistics of the economically active population, employment, unemployment and underemployment, adopted by the Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians; October 1st, 1982.](#)

This is an old resolution from 1982 which was adopted in The Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians which included the topic of underemployment.

- [Promoting empowerment of people in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and full employment and decent work for all, August 7th, 2014, \(E/RES/2014/5\)](#)
- [Promoting youth employment, July 26th, 2016, \(E/RES/2016/15\)](#)

## VII. Failed Solution Attempts

The most evident problem with the solutions that were previously set forth by many countries is the fact that they are mostly focused on unemployment, rather than both unemployment and underemployment. This motive decreases the unemployment rate and citizens perceive governments as if they are doing their job thoroughly. However, this kind of ignorance is the key to the rise of underemployment rates, which later stems from the increases in problems regarding job insecurity and precarity. In order to tackle these problems, governments should also acknowledge underemployment rates and set policies to ensure the continuity of the jobs as well as their safety.

## VIII. Possible Solutions

The first solution to this problem can be to hold summits and conferences with the participation of government officials from all Member States, in which the situation of job insecurity and precarity will be tackled as well as the concept of underemployment. It is very crucial that the severity of underemployment is portrayed and taught to these officials as in order to take action, the problem has to be recognized first. Through these international gatherings, governments can be encouraged to set forth new policies that would prioritize the employees' rights, especially in economies where job insecurity is prevalent. Countries should be encouraged to decrease the precarious jobs in their borders by coupling these new policies with the regular checks done on the institutions. Policies such as short-time compensation can be encouraged with the aim of preserving the jobs in economic crises. Short-time compensation suggests that during an economic crisis or a situation that requires a company to make extreme economic measures, instead of reducing the number of employees, it is better to reduce the individual working hours of employees so that more individuals will hold on to their jobs. This policy, however, decreases the amount of work one pursues and can contribute to the rising levels of underemployment. That is why conventions and gatherings are crucial as every country can interpret policies such as short-time compensation to their own economies and



find ways to ensure that jobs are secure while underemployment is dealt with. Furthermore, this education and raising awareness can extend to companies and employers who will be encouraged to consider the best interest of their employees. Having the assistance of relevant UN agencies such as ILO would also be fundamental in the process of tackling job insecurity and precarity. Solving this issue is a responsibility of each and every government, however, the cooperation of the private sector is also vital and to ensure that forming new organizations or sub-bodies under ILO would secure the connections that are necessary to solve this problem. All in all, the solutions to this problem should mostly revolve around the content as well as the making process of the policies that are going to be established by the governments and how to put them into use. Last but not least, while there are many global causes that lead to underemployment, most countries have specific major issues that contribute to the rising rates of underemployment which is exemplified through the differences between the cases of Spain and India. In order to address this, a mechanism can be established through with the specific conditions that give rise to underemployment in a country can be identified and investigates, so that the governments, as well as the international organizations, can find the most effective way of solving the job insecurity and precarity in such economies.

## IX. Useful Links

- “Underemployment is new unemployment”  
<https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2018-09-26/unemployment-numbers-hide-the-effects-of-underemployment>
- “Global Economic Crisis: A Brief Introduction”  
<https://www.managementstudyguide.com/global-economic-crisis.htm>
- Y-Charts (A site that you can find multiple graphs regarding economics of a country or a region, including graphs showing the changes in rates of unemployment and underemployment.)  
<https://ycharts.com/dashboard/>
- Website of the International Labour Organization  
<https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>
- “Towards Excessive Job Insecurity in Transition Economies?”  
[https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed\\_emp/documents/publication/wcms\\_142346.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_142346.pdf)

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