This issue of the Review focuses squarely on the next generation. Its contents concern the employment situation of young people across the world and, in greater detail, in south-east Europe (SEE); and studies of the impact of children’s work on their schooling generally and of survey instruments to measure child work in Zambia. Readers are thus offered articles providing a global view of specific questions affecting children and young people, and others focusing more narrowly on national situations.

In the first article, Gianni Rosas and Giovanna Rossignotti paint with a broad brush the employment situation of young people across the world. We publish this article as the subject is discussed by the 93rd Session of the International Labour Conference in June 2005, in recognition of the crucial importance of youth employment for successfully achieving poverty eradication, sustainable development and lasting peace.

The authors review the complex global demographic and labour market situation of young people today, and identify factors particularly affecting them in developed and in developing countries. They argue strongly for youth employment measures to be integrated within national economic strategies to increase aggregate demand resulting in growth and hopefully, therefore, decent jobs for young people, too. Measures targeted on their specific disadvantages are needed, and “youth-friendly” policies with high occupational potential. The probability of young people finding themselves in intermittent, insecure work, often in the informal economy, also indicates the need for urgent improvement to working conditions and the advancement of rights at work. Policies addressing both supply and demand of labour are also required, notably active labour market policies, of which the authors indicate the most effective for young people.

Finally, they point out the importance of young people gaining the right foothold in the labour market early in their lives, and the subsequent multiplier effect this has in avoiding the inter-generational transmission of poverty. Young people are future consumers and taxpayers.
and have everything to gain from integration in society. Their exclusion from society is the individual’s loss and ultimately society’s loss, too.

The next article, by Alexandre Kolev and Catherine Saget, views the youth employment question from the other end of the telescope, in this case the situation of youth labour market disadvantage in the countries/territories of south-east Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia and Serbia). The authors argue that the absence of decent work opportunities for young people in those countries has serious welfare implications, in the form of income poverty and the deterioration of human and social capital. The average youth unemployment rate there is 2.5 times higher than the European Union average, and three times higher than the adult unemployment rate. Other disturbing trends include the emergence in some areas of large pools of jobless young people who have stopped looking for work and many working in unprotected environments. The authors discuss the problems of assessing youth labour market disadvantage in the subregion, and explore its consequences. They also review and test several hypotheses regarding the multiple causes of high youth unemployment, before discussing government policies supporting youth employment and highlighting effective preventive measures.

Recent concern over child labour stems largely from the belief that it has a detrimental effect on human capital formation, and this is the background for the next article contributed by Ranjan Ray and Geoffrey Lancaster. They seek to establish whether there is a threshold of weekly hours of work for 12-14 year-olds above which their school attendance and performance are adversely affected. The significance of this question stems from the ILO’s Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No.138), which stipulates that “light work” may be permitted for children from age 12 or 13 provided it does not “prejudice their attendance at school … or their capacity to benefit from the instruction received”. The authors analyse national surveys of child labour in Belize, Cambodia, Namibia, Panama, the Philippines, Portugal and Sri Lanka. They also find evidence of the impact of hours of child labour on other aspects of learning, such as time spent on studies at home, hours of study at school and at home, and number of failures in school. The study is interesting for policy and because it seeks to correct for endogeneity (that child labour hours are determined by the child’s schooling variables, and vice versa); and considers “non-child-labour variables” (e.g. age and sex, number of siblings, educational levels of the parents) as explanatory variables, with interesting results showing the positive effects of adults’ educational levels and of households’ access to water and electricity. These last-mentioned results suggest that controlling a child’s labour market activity is not the only way to enhance his/her schooling experience and learning achievements.
In the final article, child work in Zambia is the focus for a comparative study of survey instruments by Niels-Hugo Blunch, Amit Dar, Lorenzo Guarcello, Scott Lyon, Amy Ritualo and Furio Rosati. The intention here is to compare the results generated by important surveys relied upon to provide information on child work in developing countries: the World Bank’s multi-purpose household surveys (notably the Living Standards Measurement Study/Integrated Survey series and the Priority Survey series), and the ILO’s Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour (SIMPOC). Data sets from these surveys highlight links between child work and factors such as schooling, family structure, income levels, parental education, sex of the child, to a degree of detail and clarity rarely found elsewhere. Clearly, there is much value in establishing how these survey results compare, their relative strengths and weaknesses as sources for information on child work, and the extent to which they complement each other or overlap – hence the interest of this article as a contribution to the design and implementation of future surveys on child work.

The “Books” section starts with a review of a thought-provoking volume of theoretical perspectives on work and the employment relationship. Book notes describe volumes on the “trickle-down effect” of development, the origin, development and effects of globalization and the economics of sustainable development; as well as the work behaviour of the poor and workers’ narratives of survival. New ILO publications concern forced labour, the promotion of occupational safety and health, and the reconciliation of work and family responsibilities; also, work in the fishing sector, and the promotion of youth employment.