



Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Topic 2: Equal employment opportunities and career paths for youth workers

Research report by Matilda E. Dod

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1. Definition of key terms

Youth: Individuals whose age is between 15 and 24 years.

International Labour Organization (ILO): A specialized agency of the United Nations that sets international labor standards and promotes social protection and fair employment opportunities.

United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs): Eight goals established by the UN to address global challenges such as poverty, hunger, gender equality, and environmental sustainability by the year 2015.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): A set of 17 global goals adopted by the United Nations in 2015, aimed at addressing various global challenges by 2030, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation.

Decent Work: Refers to opportunities for everyone to have productive work that provides a fair income, security in the workplace, and social protection for families, promoting personal development and social integration.

2. Introduction

The term 'youth' lacks a universally agreed international definition. For statistical purposes, the United Nations defines 'youth' as individuals between the ages of 15 and 24 years. Currently, there are 1.2 billion youth, constituting 16% of the global population. By 2030, this number is expected to increase by 7%, reaching nearly 1.3 billion. Despite being well-educated, today's youth faces challenges, with approximately 73 million unemployed members globally. Young women, in particular, often bear a disproportionate impact, experiencing longer transitions to working life and higher rates of unemployment.

3. Background information

Youth unemployment is a critical economic, social, and political challenge with far-reaching implications for peace, stability, security, and the developmental trajectories of nations. Currently, young people constitute 25% of the total working population, and one in seven is actively seeking employment. Additionally, a significant number of young university graduates find themselves underemployed, unable to utilize the skills acquired in their education. The transition from school to a stable or satisfactory job takes an average of 19 months.

This global youth employment crisis is unparalleled, with young individuals being three times more likely than adults to be unemployed. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates that the world must generate 600 million jobs over the next decade to address the current 200 million unemployed and accommodate the 40 million new job market entrants annually.

Recognizing the pivotal role of young people, efforts to achieve full and productive employment align with the Millennium Development Goals, targeting the eradication of extreme poverty. In industrialized nations, the focus is on securing decent jobs for millions of youths entering the labor market each year. In contrast, developing countries face a more fundamental challenge: not only creating jobs but also enhancing the quality of work for young individuals often engaged in underemployment and the informal economy. Young people are integral to building the foundations of tomorrow's economies and societies, contributing as productive workers, entrepreneurs, consumers, agents of change, and members of civil society.

4. Major countries involved

France

In 2017, France faced a youth unemployment rate of 22.3%, significantly higher than the overall unemployment rate of 8.9%. The level of education played a crucial role in shaping the employment landscape for French youth. Those who did not pursue higher education programs had a markedly low employment rate of 30%, in stark contrast to the more than 80% employment rate for those with higher education qualifications.

France grappled with a considerable high school dropout rate, contributing to a substantial population of low-skilled youth workers. In response, the country implemented a labor law in 2010 to establish a statutory minimum wage specifically for the youth population. Public programs were also introduced to promote job training, enhancing the readiness of workers to step into new roles. These initiatives aimed to generate more jobs, especially for low-skilled workers, while simultaneously reducing labor costs through subsidies and other measures.

To address youth unemployment comprehensively, France made strides in increasing higher education enrollment among its youth, successfully meeting the Europe 2020 target of reducing early school leaving to below 10%. Similar to other European Union countries, France implemented school-to-work policies to facilitate the transition of youths from education to the workforce after completing their higher education. These multifaceted efforts aimed to provide French youth with better opportunities and address the challenges posed by high unemployment rates and skill disparities.

South Africa

As of 2014, South Africa holds the fourth position globally in terms of the highest percentage of

unemployed youth, with 52.6% of individuals aged 15–24 actively seeking employment being unemployed. The distribution of youth unemployment reveals significant disparities, with a notable difference between young whites (12%) and young blacks (70%). A substantial portion of the unemployed youth in South Africa has never experienced formal employment.

One proposed explanation for this phenomenon is the relative generosity of South Africa's social pension program compared to similar middle-income countries. Particularly among the white population, some senior South Africans receive pensions nearly twice the per capita income. This has resulted in unemployed youth relying on financial support from their elders, potentially diminishing their motivation to actively seek employment. Additionally, the higher wages offered by larger firms, coupled with associated costs like transportation and housing, often make lower-paying jobs from smaller firms less viable for many young individuals. Consequently, a significant number of South African youth opt to remain unemployed until they can secure positions in larger firms.

The educational landscape further contributes to the challenges faced by South African youth, with many leaving the school system prematurely. Among individuals aged 15–24, this demographic is the most vulnerable in the South African labor market. In 2020, the unemployment rate for this age group reached 59.0%, while among graduates in the same age group, the unemployment rate was 33.1%. These statistics underscore the multifaceted nature of youth unemployment in South Africa, encompassing economic, social, and educational dimensions.

Greece

Greece has grappled with persistently high levels of youth unemployment, ranking among the highest in the world. In 2009, the unemployment rate for youth up to 24 years old in Greece stood at 24.2%, significantly higher than the EU-27 average of 18.3% during the same period.

Notably, in 1998, Greece faced the highest unemployment rate among higher education graduates in the 25–29 age group across the EU. This situation was attributed to a lack of demand for highly educated individuals at that time. Unfortunately, this trend of low employment for educated youth has persisted. As of 2009, statistics revealed that "one in three higher education graduates, two in three secondary graduates, and one in three compulsory education graduates" had not secured stable employment.

Efforts by unions to advocate for wage increases through collective bargaining have contributed to obtaining higher wages for young workers. However, despite these efforts, the wages of young workers in Greece remained considerably lower than those in almost all other countries within the EU-15. This persistent challenge underscores the complexity of youth unemployment issues in Greece, intertwining factors of education, demand for skilled labor, and economic conditions.

5. UN involvement

The World Programme of Action for Youth (WPAY) serves as a comprehensive policy framework, offering both guidelines for national action and recommendations for international support aimed at enhancing the well-being of young people. Within WPAY, point IV B specifically addresses youth unemployment, presenting proposals to address this critical issue.

Moreover, SDG Action 5.3.6¹⁵ is designed to contribute significantly to accelerating progress toward achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8), which focuses on promoting inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment, and decent work for all. The proposal outlines a target to provide 60,000 job opportunities for young people by the end of 2025. This initiative includes a commitment to allocate 35% of these opportunities to females and 7% to the most vulnerable groups. By aligning with SDG 8, this action plan aims to make meaningful strides in enhancing

economic prospects and employment outcomes for the youth population, with a specific focus on gender inclusivity and support for the most vulnerable segments of society.

6. Useful links

- <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2008/resolution%202008-18.pdf>
- <https://www.un.org/esa/socdev/unyin/documents/wpay2010.pdf>
- <https://pjp-eu.coe.int/documents/42128013/47262613/Table+14.+Career+paths+and+employment+opportunities.pdf/cccb5bde-97f6-8958-b870-ed5d129e1026?t=1550248489000>

7. Bibliography

- <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/promoting-employment-opportunities-youth-and-women-through-providing-vocational-and>
- <https://www.un.org/youthenvoy/employment/>
- <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/youth>
- <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/economic-growth/>
- https://www.google.com/url?q=https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Youth_unemployment&usg=AOvVaw2me8bwxW2ewSOSY6zc-nBJ
- https://www.google.com/url?q=https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_emp/documents/publication/wcms_140955.pdf&usg=AOvVaw15WzX4zWJ10SE7xAWSyi2p