

## **INTERNATIONAL LABOUR ORGANIZATION**

### **Subregional Tripartite Meeting of Experts on Decent Employment for Young People**

Ljubljana  
6 -7 December 2007

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### **Conclusions of the Tripartite Meeting on Decent Employment for Young People**

The Tripartite Meeting on Decent Employment for Young People

Recalling the ILO decent work paradigm, the Global Employment Agenda (GEA), the United Nations Millennium Declaration, the Declaration of Philadelphia and the international labour standards, including those relating to the promotion of employment,

Recalling the Resolution concerning youth employment adopted by the International Labour Conference in 2005 and the Conclusions of the 7th European Regional Meeting of the ILO also adopted in 2005,

Recalling the Conclusions of the 3rd Ministerial Conference on Employment and Social Policy in South-Eastern Europe, adopted in October 2007, whereby Ministers confirmed the commitment to develop and implement strategies that give young people a real and equal opportunity to find decent work,

Having met in Ljubljana from 6 to 7 December 2007,

Adopts this seventh day of December 2007 the following conclusions:

#### **The challenge of decent employment for young people**

1. Youth employment remains a challenge shared by the countries of the Western Balkans and Slovenia. In the Western Balkans the youth unemployment rate and level have increased during the past decade despite buoyant economic growth. The jobless growth path experienced by many countries in this region has disproportionately affected young people. In 2006, the youth unemployment rate was more than double that of the population in the working age. Despite higher educational attainment, young women are more exposed to unemployment and inactivity than their male counterparts.

2. Open unemployment is only one aspect of the youth employment challenge. Many young workers are underemployed or working under precarious arrangements, often in the informal economy. Like in many other countries that underwent transition, worker discouragement, informal employment and temporary work are on the rise.
3. Youth employment is highly dependent on the overall employment situation. However, employment prospects of young people are influenced by factors such as sex, age, family background, disability and national origin as well as education and training level. Certain groups of young people, including youth with disabilities, young Roma, internally displaced persons and refugees, face greater difficulties than others in entering the job market and therefore need special support in securing a decent working life. Others, regardless of their pre-work background, encounter discrimination at work.
4. High and sustained economic growth is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the generation of employment for young people. A range of integrated economic and social policies are needed to enhance the employment content of growth. These should focus on labour supply and demand and address both the quantity and quality of employment.

## Decent employment for young people at national level

5. While recognizing that interventions vary from country to country, the Meeting agreed that decent employment for young people cannot be achieved through fragmented and isolated interventions. It requires long-term, sustained and concerted action that builds upon an integrated strategy for growth and job creation, including targeted interventions to help disadvantaged young people overcome the specific barriers they face in entering and remaining in the labour market. This strategy should touch upon a number of policies and measures, including:
  - a) ***Education and training policies that allow young people to acquire skills that are relevant to the labour market.*** These policies could be made more responsive to labour market requirements by engaging employers' and workers' organizations that are the main actors in the labour market. Vocational education and training should include work experience and be based on broad occupationally related and employability skills. The latter help young people communicate effectively, work in teams, solve problems and, more generally, cope with fast changing technology and work organization. Workplace learning fosters productivity, innovation, competitiveness and improves occupational health and safety. The introduction of national qualifications frameworks can be instrumental in promoting occupational mobility and recognizing skills acquired through prior learning and work experience. Policy coherence and more effective coordination across systems and institutions, including between ministries of education and of labour, should be sought at all levels of education, training and lifelong learning.

- b) ***Labour market policies and programmes to smooth the transition of disadvantaged youth to decent employment.*** These policies and programmes should: target individuals' needs to help them overcome disadvantages; respond to labour market requirements; be part of a comprehensive package of services and involve the social partners in their design, monitoring and evaluation. They can also be instrumental in promoting youth employment when they are part of broader policies addressing less developed regions.
  - c) ***Entrepreneurship and self-employment as a career development path and source of decent work for young people.*** Youth employment strategies should promote an entrepreneurial culture. Entrepreneurship development programmes should be part of a comprehensive set of measures (e.g. entrepreneurship education, enabling administrative and regulatory framework, business assistance and support, access to finance) to make it easier for young people to start and run their own business.
  - d) ***Employment services such as career counselling and guidance, job-search skills and job fairs, and labour market information that can help young jobseekers identify suitable employment opportunities.*** The Public Employment Service is crucial in ensuring that disadvantaged youth have access to labour market information and to individualized employment plans and assistance while waiting for entry to the labour market.
  - e) ***Labour legislation on decent working conditions that is based on international labour standards and promotes good governance of the labour market.*** Labour laws can generate different results depending on their design, the enforcement mechanism to which they are attached and the policy setting in which they are situated. If their design balances the needs and interests of workers and employers, these laws may contribute to increase productivity and, at the same time, protect young people engaged in non-standard forms of employment, including temporary work.
  - f) ***Approaches to help young workers move from the informal to the formal economy.*** Informality matters because it deters investment and productivity. The review of non-wage labour costs could be considered to reduce youth unemployment and promote employment in the formal economy.
6. Being the main actors in the labour market, employers' and workers' organizations have an important contribution to make in the design and implementation of policies and programmes promoting decent employment for young people. Social dialogue at all levels on youth employment can provide a mechanism to balance, through consensus, the interests of governments, employers' and workers' organizations.
  7. Employers' organizations are key in fostering on-the-job training and enterprise learning, as well as in promoting youth entrepreneurship. They can offer a range of support services to young members, including business partnerships, access to physical and financial resources, mentoring, contacts and networks.

8. Trade unions have an important role to play to ensure that issues such as job creation for youth, improvement of working conditions and promotion of young people's rights at work are assigned priority in the policy agenda. Promoting action for young people's organization and representation in trade unions can improve the situation of young people in the labour market, give them voice and protect their rights at work.

## Future action

9. The Meeting recommended that Governments, employers' and workers' organizations of the countries of the Western Balkans and Slovenia consider the development of youth employment action plans as a means to prioritize policy responses to the youth employment challenge and to place youth employment at the heart of economic and social policies.
10. The Meeting commended the joint initiative of the International Labour Office and of the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs of Slovenia for organizing a forum to exchange national practice and experience. It called upon the International Labour Office to further expand and sustain efforts in the promotion of decent employment for young women and men at both national and regional levels by:
  - a) further assisting member States in collecting and disseminating statistics that allow for a better understanding of the magnitude of the youth employment challenge and, consequently, for shaping effective policies and programmes on decent employment for young people;
  - b) strengthening the cooperation at sub-regional level, including through innovative networking and knowledge-sharing modalities.
11. The Meeting invited the International Labour Office to submit these Conclusions to the Informal Ministerial Meeting of European Union Ministers of Labour and Social Affairs that will be held on the side of the next International Labour Conference in June 2008 and will be devoted to the topic of youth employment in the Western Balkans.